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Stalled Flight: Horatian Remains in Baudelaire's "Le Cygne"

KATHERINE ELKINS

Dedicated to Victor Hugo and opening with thoughts of Virgil's Andromache, Baudelaire's "Le Cygne"¹ situates poetic memory within a world of multiple influences. At first glance, the poem seems to follow a well-worn structure. It opens with the traditional nod to precursors—remembrances of both Hugo and Virgil—before progressing to the speaker's own personal memory of a past event—the remembrance of seeing a swan in the heart of Paris.² And yet, the significance of the swan continues to puzzle critics. Perhaps the most interesting question surrounding the poem remains that posed by Richard Terdiman: "What's the swan doing in Baudelaire's 'Le Cygne'?"³ Despite numerous hypotheses, critics have overlooked the possibility that even this most personal memory is the glimpse of yet another precursor: Horace's swan from Ode 2.20. In fact, comparison of the two poems yields more than just the revelation of another literary precursor disguised as a material and personal memory: in Horace's poem, the *metaphor* of the swan guarantees the future immortality of the poet, an immortality that renders lamentations or mourning unnecessary. But the swan reappears as an *allegory* in Baudelaire, an allegory in which the swan represents the truth of time's passage and the poet's eventual mortality. For Baudelaire, the swan no longer guarantees the pure presence of the lyric voice, as it does in Horace. Rather, it reveals the ghostly memories of other poets, memories that show up as fragments of the speaker's own past.⁴ The lyrical voice no longer preempts mourning but calls upon grief's very necessity by revealing, at its very core, the mortal remains of another.

In Horace's Ode 2.20, the poet writes of his own immortality by literalizing the classical metaphor of the poet as swan. Even among Horace

scholars this ode does not receive as much attention as it should, because it is often seen as displaying a certain “vulgarity” and “offensive realism” atypical of Horace.⁵ I therefore cite the poem in its entirety:

Non usitata nec tenui ferar
 penna biformis per liquidum aethera
 vates neque in terris morabor
 longius invidiaque maior

urbes relinquam. Non ego, pauperum
 sanguis parentum, non ego, quem vocas
 dilecte Maecenas, obibo
 nec Stygia cohibebor unda:

iam iam residunt cruribus asperae
 pelles et album mutor in alitem
 superne nascunturque leves
 per digitos umerosque plumae.

Iam Daedaleo notior Icaro
 visam gementis litora Bosphori
 Syrtisque Gaetulas canorus
 ales Hyperboreosque campos;

me Colchus et, qui dissimulat metum
 Marsae cohortis Dacus et ultimi
 noscent Geloni, me peritus
 discet Hiber Rhodanique poter.

Absint inani funere neniae
 luctusque turpes et querimoniae;
 conpesce clamorem ac sepulcri
 mitte supervacuos honores.

[On no common or feeble wings
 shall I fly in double form through the liquid air,
 a poet still, nor remain on earth any longer,
 but overcoming envy

I shall leave the towns behind. Not I,
 the son of poor parents, not I, invited friend of

beloved Maecenas, shall die,
or be imprisoned by the waters of the Styx.

Even now the wrinkled skin is gathering
on my ankles, and above I am changing into a white swan,
and over my fingers and shoulders
delicate feathers sprout.

Soon, a singing swan, and more renowned than Icarus,
born of Daedalus, I shall visit
the shores of the moaning Bosphorus, I shall visit
Roman Africa and the plains of the Arctic.

The Colchian shall come to know me, and the Dacian,
who conceals his dread of our Marsian cohorts,
and the far Geloni; by reading me the Spaniard
shall become learned, as well as the Rhone-drinkers.

Let dirges be absent from a pointless funeral,
and displays of grief
and lamentation. Restrain your cries
and spare my tomb these empty tributes.]⁶

Like Virgil's poetic prophecy that, through the *Aeneid*, promises the presence of a great city, the speaker relies on a memory that will make him present to future generations. Both mourning and an empty tomb, figurations of his absence, are idle in the case of the poet who will be forever present. This perpetual presence relies on the trope of the swan, a swan which even upon its death sings, and whose voice, a song of pure presence, will ensure that the poet's voice crosses the boundaries of time. Thus, even when the speaker speaks of the future, he employs the adverb "iam"[now]. Furthermore, like the swan which is able to span spatial boundaries through flight, the poet will be present to faraway places.

Horace's poem is also playing on a literalization of the immortality of poet as swan. The literalization of the metaphor is the aspect of the poem that most classical scholars find in poor taste—one of the few poems, critics note, in which Horace could have shown more restraint. This sort of "indecenty," one suspects, is precisely the kind of thing that would interest the French poet of the *Fleurs du Mal*. What makes Horace's poem so outrageous is that he refuses to confine himself to a classic Ovidian metamorphosis in which the self is both preserved in eternal form and

entirely hidden in a complete and instantaneous transformation into something new. For Horace, however, the metaphor of the swan preempts this sort of disappearance through complete transformation. Rather, he presents the speaker's transmogrification, which takes place slowly, and before our eyes,⁷ until the metaphor swan/poet is literalized. His are no mere Icarus wings that have been poorly attached: plumage actually grows on his shoulders and wrinkled skin gathers around his ankles. Neither purely human nor entirely bird, the poet shall "soar in double form through liquid air" as both poet and swan.

This literalization of metaphor fails to function as a classical metaphor. Traditionally the trope relies on the substitution of one thing for another without apparent difficulty, just as humans are metamorphosed into inanimate objects in Ovid without tarrying midway through the process.⁸ Instead, there is a continued interaction of poet and swan such that they are fused in a co-presence.⁹ In fact, the poet's immortality depends upon the literalization of the metaphor in which both aspects, poet and bird, are retained. The poet's immortality stems from his "biformis vates," a double form. He also functions simultaneously as poet and prophet of the future, a double connotation carried by the term "vates." Nonetheless, prophecy is nothing if not materially present, for this very duality rather crudely materializes before our eyes. The delicacy of an abstract metaphor becomes an intensely material and bodily transformation that is, unlike in Ovid, stalled midway.

It is only through such an incomplete bodily transformation that the poet is able to fly across the boundaries of time and space, visiting by flight "gementis litora Bosphori" [the shores of the moaning Bosphorus], "Syrthisque Gaetulas [. . .] Hypoboreosque campos" [and Syrtes and the plains of the Hyperboreans]. His is a rather odd kind of immortality, however, as some scholars have pointed out. For this double form allows the poet to fly over those areas synonymous during the Roman period with barbarism and extreme danger. His audiences, in other words, will include enemies of Rome.¹⁰ The extension of himself is thus also an extension of his readership. His own material, even "animal," extension through time and space is mirrored by the extension of his readership to a "barbarous" audience.

For Horace, then, the memorial swan functions as the vehicle for extension through space and time, a guarantor of presence to future times and places. The swan, in other words, is the link to a future that will mirror the present "now." But this extension, again, is made possible by the metaphor which functions as addition rather than substitution: the swan's animal qualities are added to and augment the poet's. So Horatian

memory does not reveal the essence of the poet as he is stripped down to a bare minimum. Instead, it functions to add yet one more aspect to the poet, piling up traits rather than paring them down.

This piling up brings us, of course, to Baudelaire's very modern swan. Here is Baudelaire's own swan ode¹¹:

I

Andromaque, je pense à vous! Ce petit fleuve,
 Pauvre et triste miroir où jadis resplendit
 L'immense majesté de vos douleurs de veuve,
 Ce Simois menteur qui par vos pleurs grandit,

A fécondé soudain ma mémoire fertile,
 Comme je traversais le nouveau Carrousel.
 Le vieux Paris n'est plus (la forme d'une ville
 Change plus vite, hélas! Que le cœur d'un mortel);

Je ne vois qu'en esprit tout ce camp de baraques,
 Ces tas de chapiteaux ébauchés et de fûts,
 Les herbes, les gros blocs verdis par l'eau des flaques
 Et, brillant aux carreaux, le bric-à-brac confus.

Là s'étalait jadis une ménagerie;
 Là je vis un matin, à l'heure où sous les cieux
 Froids et clairs le Travail s'éveille, où la voirie
 Pousse un sombre ouragan dans l'air silencieux,

Un cygne qui s'était évadé de sa cage,
 Et, de ses pieds palmés frottant le pavé sec,
 Sur le sol raboteux traînait son blanc plumage.
 Près d'un ruisseau sans eau la bête ouvrant le bec

Baignait nerveusement ses ailes dans la poudre,
 Et disait, le cœur plein de son beau lac natal:
 "Eau, quand donc pleuvras-tu? quand tonneras-tu foudre?"
 Je vois ce malheureux, mythe étrange et fatal,

Vers le ciel quelquefois, comme l'homme d'Ovide,
 Vers le ciel ironique et cruellement bleu,
 Sur son cou convulsif tendant sa tête avide,
 Comme s'il adressait des reproches à Dieu!

II

Paris change! Mais rien dans ma mélancolie
 N'a bougé! palais neufs, échafaudages, blocs
 Vieux faubourgs, tout pour moi devient allégorie,
 Et mes chers souvenirs sont plus lourds que des rocs.

Aussi devant ce Louvre une image m'opprime:
 Je pense à mon grand cygne, avec ses gestes fous,
 Comme les exilés, ridicule et sublime,
 Et rongé d'un désir sans trêve! et puis à vous,

Andromaque, des bras d'un grand époux tombée,
 Vil bétail, sous la main du superbe Pyrrhus,
 Auprès d'un tombeau vide en extase courbée;
 Veuve d'Hector, hélas! et femme d'Hélénus!

Je pense à la negresse, amaigrie et phtisique,
 Piétinant dans la boue, et cherchant, l'oeil hagard,
 Les cocotiers absents de la superbe Afrique
 Derrière la muraille immense du brouillard;

A quiconque a perdu ce qui ne se retrouve
 Jamais! jamais! à ceux qui s'abreuvent de pleurs
 Et tettent la Douleur comme une bonne louve!
 Aux maigres orphelins séchant comme des fleurs!

Ainsi dans la forêt où mon esprit s'exile
 Un vieux Souvenir sonne à plein souffle du cor!
 Je pense aux matelots oubliés dans une île,
 Aux captifs, aux vaincus! . . . à bien d'autres encor!

[Andromache! I think of you! The stream,
 Poor, sad mirror where once shown
 The immense majesty of your mourning,
 The lying Simois enlarged by your tears,

Suddenly impregnated my fertile memory,
 As I was passing through the new Carrousel neighborhood.
 Old Paris is no longer (the form of a city
 Changes faster, alas! than the heart of a mortal);

Only in my mind do I see that camp of huts,
 Those heaps of shafts and rough-hewn capitals,
 The grass, the large blocks turned green by water from puddles,
 And, shining in a checkered pattern, the jumbled bric-a-brac.

There a menagerie once sprawled;
 There I saw one morning, at the hour when Work awakes
 Beneath the cold clear skies, when garbage
 Thrusts a dark hurricane into the silent air,

A swan escaped from its cage,
 And, with its webbed feet scraping the dry pavement,
 it was dragging its white plumage over the uneven ground.
 Near a small, parched stream the beast, opening its beak,

Was nervously bathing its wings in the dust,
 And saying, its heart full of its beautiful native lake:
 "Water, when will you rain down? Lightning, when will you thunder?"
 I see this unfortunate one, strange and fatal myth,

Towards the sky at times, like Ovid's man,
 Towards the ironic and cruelly blue sky,
 Raising up its eager head on its convulsive neck,
 As if it were addressing its reproaches to God!

II

Paris changes! But nothing in my melancholy
 Has moved! new palaces, scaffolding, blocks,
 Old suburbs, everything becomes allegory for me.
 And my dear memories are heavier than rocks.

And so, before the Louvre, an image oppresses me:
 I think of my great swan, with its mad gestures,
 Like the exiled, ridiculous and sublime,
 Consumed by a desire without respite! And then of you,

Andromache, torn from the arms of a great husband,
 Now like a beast beneath the hand of proud Pyrrhus,
 Near an empty tomb bent over in a trance;
 Widow of Hector, alas! And wife of Helenus!

I think of the negress, emaciated and consumptive,
 Stomping in the mud, and searching with haggard eye,
 For the absent coconut palms of magnificent Africa
 Behind the immense wall of fog;

Of whomever has lost what can never be refound
 Never! never! of those who drink tears
 And to whom Sorrow gives suck like a good she-wolf!
 Of the skinny orphans withering like flowers!

Thus in the forest where my mind is exiled
 An old Memory sounds at full blast of the horn!
 I think of sailors forgotten on an island,
 Of captives, of the conquered! . . . of many others still!]

In his modern version of Ode 2.20, "Le Cygne," Baudelaire rewrites the memorial swan as calling forth an infinite addition of memories that speak of continual loss and mourning. While Horace's swan still implies a certain degree of continuity and unity of the poet through metaphorical fusion, Baudelaire's swan underlines the extent to which memory, rather than integrating one with others, actually exposes one to a continual experience of exile and doubling. Critics have tended to read Baudelaire's swan as humanized through its comparison, within the poem, to "l'homme d'Ovide."¹² In fact, Baudelaire seems to be suggesting a kind of counter-discourse, a non-fusion of bird and man that is an anti-Ovidian model of counter-memory.¹³ Baudelaire's swan does not fuse with the speaker but remains exterior to him. The swan represents, in other words, the elements of the self that are dehumanized, forever lost to the outside world.

The swan first appears as a memory in the poem. The speaker remembers a "menagerie" where the new Carousel now stands. He once saw a swan escaped from its cage, its webbed feet rubbing the dry pavement while it dragged its white plumage on the uneven ground,

Et, de ses pieds palmés frottant le pavé sec,
 Sur le sol raboteux traînait son blanc plumage.

[And, with its webbed feet scraping the dry pavement,
 it was dragging its white plumage over the uneven ground].

Baudelaire's swan is unable to fly or cross boundaries of space and time: no longer forever and everywhere present, the swan is already a vision of a lost past that has been covered over by a new and different present in the form of the new Carrousel. Whereas Horace's swan is forever "familiar" even in foreign places, Baudelaire's is forever foreign, even at the center of a nation.

Both sublime and ridiculous like "les exilés," this swan cannot fly through liquid air but instead drags its wings through the materiality of a dusty Paris, "baignait nerveusement ses ailes dans la poudre" [nervously bathing its wings in the dust]. While Horace's swan flies from the urban center (urbes) to the farthest reaches, Baudelaire's swan is exiled far from home, a stranger in the very heart of the metropolis. Exile, then, occurs in both time and space. The swan is no longer a symbol of a possible correspondence between present and future, but an allegory of the disparity between past and present. Past and present are in complete dissonance, the swan's heart always full of another time and place, "le coeur plein de son beau lac natal" [its heart full of its beautiful home-lake]. Baudelaire's swan also mocks the possibility of poetic flight; it mirrors the speaker's own feelings of exile and immobility.

The situation of the Baudelairean swan in the midst of a quickly changing city only underlines its anachronistic character. The swan cannot flee the city through immortality. Instead, the city flees the swan through continual change and the permanent disappearance of the old. This swan can only flap its wings nervously in response to this change, a kind of futile movement linked to an inability to fly. This impotent movement, perhaps, mirrors the poet's own response to a Paris that, he tells us, changes faster than the human heart. Memories, rather than permitting flight, weigh the speaker down: "Mes chers souvenirs," [My dear memories] he tells us, "sont plus lourds que des rocs" [are heavier than rocks].

Baudelaire's speaker does not fuse with his swan; he can only watch from a distance, exiled from his poetic double and the possibility of immortality. This memory of the swan, moreover, is quickly transformed into the present by way of mythology. The speaker shifts from the *passé simple* of his past experience, "je vis un matin [. . .] un cygne" [I saw one morning [. . .] a swan], to a more generalized, present vision, "Je vois ce malheureux, mythe étrange et fatal" [I see this unfortunate one, strange and fatal myth]. The unfortunate swan quickly becomes a strange myth of fatality. Thus Baudelaire's swan, no longer a prophecy of his own immortality, reveals a strange and fatal mortality that can only be comprehended as myth. This myth, however, is already visible in the poet's

inability to be fully present *even in the present* because of memories of the past that haunt his inner vision.

It is here that we begin to see that the swan for Baudelaire points to the poet's sense of incompleteness in the present. Lamentation and mourning—unnecessary in Horace—are unavoidable in Baudelaire. The past returns in the form of an image that does not liberate but oppresses, as does the image of the swan that, according to the speaker, "m'opprime." The image of the swan, rather than fusing with the poet, actually fuses with the figure of mourning represented by Andromache. The speaker tells us Andromache is like anyone who "a perdu ce qui ne se retrouve" [has lost something that can never be refound]. The empty tomb in Baudelaire's poem, "un tombeau vide," reveals the emptiness implicit in the extreme duality of Andromache's existence. While with her heart she mourns for her dead husband Hector, she must live in the present as the wife of Hélénius.

For Andromache, perfect specular reflection of the self in the present is a lie. The stream is a

Pauvre et triste miroir où jadis resplendit
L'immense majesté de vos douleurs de veuve

[Poor, sad mirror where once shown
The immense majesty of your mourning].

Now, however, the mirror is a "menteur" [liar] because the stream shows her appearance to be the same as it was in the past, while the present around her has changed more quickly than her own heart. Horace's desire to live on in the future thus becomes, for Baudelaire's Andromache, a desire to live on in a past that would correspond to her own interior self. The poet as prophet becomes, instead, a poet whose only inspiration comes from a vision of grief and mourning, a vision which "a fécondé soudain ma mémoire fertile" [suddenly impregnated my fertile memory]. The inspiration comes from a vision of the dissonance between Andromache's exterior and interior perception, a dissonance mirrored in a speaker whose interior and exterior visions do not coincide. The human heart changes at a different rhythm from that of the world: this is the lesson of Andromache. The speaker laments the truth of *mortality*:

Le vieux Paris n'est plus (la forme d'une ville
Change plus vite, hélas! que le coeur *d'un mortel*) [emphasis added]

[Old Paris is no longer (the form of a city
Changes faster, alas! than the heart of a mortal)]

The old Paris, "le vieux Paris," is not necessarily an improvement on the present, however, for the past is not privy to an order and meaning that is absent from the present. Instead, it too contains "le bric-à-brac confus" [jumbled bric-a-brac], a series of past memories that cannot be fused into a single, integral past, nor a single, integral self. Rather, the swan evokes memories of a hurricane that stirs up debris. Memory, perhaps, is nothing more than this wind that stirs up, however briefly, fragments of the past.

Horace's metaphor of the swan allows for a single addition that is a fusion of poet and swan. For Baudelaire, however, the single addition becomes multiple additions, which only add to the swirl of memories. Like the bric-a-brac of the past, memories seem to pile up rather than fusing to form a whole self in the present.¹⁴ This is clearest when, near the end of the poem, thoughts of the swan lead to thoughts of Andromache. The doubleness does not end here. Then, the speaker thinks "à la negresse" [of the negress] before thinking of anyone who has lost what cannot be refound, of orphans, of lost sailors, of captives, the vanquished, and finally "à bien d'autres encor!" [of many others still!]. Memory, rather than a reflection that brings one back to one's self in the present, reveals both past and present to be a swirling of refuse, a piling up of memories without end.

This disorder of memory in Baudelaire, rather than the fusion of metaphor, is represented by the discontinuity of allegory. The speaker thus confesses that "tout pour moi devient allégorie" [everything for me becomes allegory]. The metaphor of the swan turns into the allegory of a myth. If the symbol of the swan/poet in Horace represents an (albeit grotesque) fusion, the speaker of Baudelaire's poem experiences everything as a dissonance that acquires continuity only through its succession in time. Everything the speaker sees is different from what appears in his "esprit." The speaker of the poem, like the swan, is at no time fully present, but continually thinks of those absent, whether they be the literary character of Andromache or the "image [qui] m'opprime:/Je pense à mon grande cygne" [image which oppresses me:/ I think of my great swan]. The continuity between far-off lands and the poet in Horace is replaced by a Paris that changes at a different pace than the speaker's heart. If the symbol of the swan/poet in Horace is a fusion, the speaker of Baudelaire's poem experiences everything as discontinuity—as an allegory that acquires meaning through the transformation of time rather than by re-

maining eternally unchanged. Unable to be fully present, the speaker has a double vision, seeing in his mind's eye one thing, in the present exterior world another.

Allegory in "Le Cygne" has long been the site of scholarly speculation and contestation.¹⁵ My own reading participates in this ongoing debate, proposing yet one more theory of allegory: allegory as double vision. And yet, this theory of allegory further elucidates what Weinberg calls one of the innovations of Symbolist poetry. In *The Limits of Symbolism*, he argues that one of Baudelaire's innovations is the poetic expression of just one half of a metaphorical relationship. In the case of "Le Cygne," he explains, the analogy between swan and speaker is represented by only one half of the correspondence: the swan. Thus the "swan, who was like the speaker (and others) in his situation and his emotion, is now no longer in that relationship. He stands by himself and for himself."¹⁶ While the poem starts with a detailed explanation of how and why Andromache resonates in the speaker's memory, Baudelaire can write "Aux captifs, aux vaincus" at the end of the poem, and the reader has an implicit sense of how these figures correspond to the speaker.

Applying Weinberg's reading to the question of memory, one could say that this initiation into reading is also a lesson in reading a very personal and private memorial shorthand. The lyric self is no longer comprised of a single, integral past, nor a single, integral self. If we are to read the lyric voice, we must learn to read the piling up of memories that constitutes it. The quick succession of memories at the end of Baudelaire's poem is no mere jumble of bric-à-brac, however, precisely because we are able to understand the speaker's memorial process as it continues in a condensed, compressed fashion. Having shown us the way in which Andromache and the swan resonate in the speaker's memory, we are quick to place the abbreviated memories that succeed them in their fuller context. The passing chain of associations—a chain of memories usually impenetrable to others—is rendered readable in its original, fleeting form.

I would further argue that this dismantling of metaphor also teaches us to read allegorically, by forcing us to see with double vision. "Le Cygne," we should remember, is one of the poems written to replace those censored from the original *Les Fleurs du Mal* as a consequence of the well-known trial. Undoubtedly, reading with double vision means imagining the absent, censored poems behind this new one. Reading allegorically however, also implies reading the lyric voice differently. We have only the speaker's memories of others, not memories of himself. By learning to read the shorthand of the speaker's fleeting memories, we also learn to read for the missing half of the metaphorical relationship swan/poet: the

poet. While we read the material chain of memories before us in the form of a poem, we imagine in our mind's eye the absent speaker. We are forced, in other words, to see the speaker as the other, uninvoked half of those correspondences he remembers. Allegory, we are told, reveals the strange and fatal lesson of mortality. It is not surprising, then, that our allegorical double vision reads the mortality of a speaker whose lyric voice may be as fleeting as his chain of memories. The lyric self is glimpsed only indirectly, as the missing correspondence to memories of others.

Reading Horace's Swan Ode behind Baudelaire's "Le Cygne" as I have just done takes allegorical double vision yet one step further, while at the same time showing the reversibility of the process. Baudelaire's poem serves as the very material, present vision, and Horace is the ghostly voice we must hold in our mind's eye. As discussed earlier, Baudelaire's "Le Cygne" evokes the piling up of poetic memories, a piling up that also covers over what comes before. In the same way, Horace's *immortality* is replaced by Baudelaire's poetic *mortality*: Horace's swan is obscured, lost beneath the piling up of memories of others. Implicit in Baudelaire's re-writing of Horace, then, is the possibility that "Le Cygne" in turn will become one more ghostly memory in a chain that continues to pile up, obscuring those beneath in the process.

Returning to "Le Cygne," it now becomes possible to read this same allegorical double vision in its very structure. Memory in Horace is directed solely towards the present-future. By contrast, Baudelaire's is a doubled and ambivalent memory that forces the speaker into constant discontinuity with the present moment. The poem itself mirrors the speaker's doubleness, divided into sections marked one and two. In the first part of the poem, the speaker thinks of Andromache and then of his own personal memory of the swan. In the second, the process is reversed so that he thinks first of the swan and then of Andromache. This contrast mirrors the two orders of memory in the poem. Andromache is the speaker's memory of literary influence, whereas the swan, at least overtly, is portrayed as an actual experience in the speaker's own life. In the first half of the poem, the poet begins with a precursor—a literary figure who impregnates his fertile memory. In the second half of the poem, his memories are heavier than rocks,¹⁷ and the image of the swan oppresses.

A seemingly simple reversal is also a change, because the two figures in the first half become an unending list of memories in the second. The "I" remembering seems able to continue indefinitely before arriving at the end of the sequence, an end that would turn an endless succession into a story with a conclusion. At the same time, the "mémoire fertile" of the first half of the poem becomes an immobilized melancholy. Memo-

ries in the second half are nonetheless both elements of a succession of thoughts in time and rocks that weigh down the speaker. The self, in other words, is represented as stalled movement or interrupted flight—both weighed down by memory and subject to the endless flight of thoughts that continue to succeed each other in time. This list of loss continues to lead the poet away from his own doubleness or lack of singularity towards thoughts that fade into those of the most generalizable and unnamed, ending finally with mention of “bien d’autres encor” [and many others still]. The famous correspondences of Baudelaire are perhaps nothing so much as “la forêt où son esprit s’exile” [the forest where his mind is exiled], in which an “old Souvenir” produces an unending chain of thoughts of loss.

“Le Cygne,” in fact, can be seen to be a poem in which the swan reveals a sort of futile, immobilized movement, a formulation of memory that first arises in the Middle Ages.¹⁸ The speaker’s memories are double—both fertile and immobilizing.¹⁹ Furthermore, they give indirect knowledge of the speaker’s own place in a world continually transformed by time. Like the self that experiences the present through mourning—seeing itself as voice for multiple lost pasts—the speaker in “Le Cygne” experiences himself as partially dead, frozen and immobile. At the same time he is nonetheless a very real part of a world in which changes and loss continue to pile up. It is a world in which correspondences multiply rather than providing a stable point of reference.

The speaker’s memories are constantly redoubled as he continually remembers more correspondences,²⁰ a multiplication that would seem to mirror those of his literary precursors. For we also have a poetic remembering not just of one precursor, as the dedication to Hugo would suggest, but of Horace and Virgil, and no doubt “bien d’autres encore!” Indeed the chain of memories that links the personal memory of the swan to the classical references to Andromache and the Horatian swan reveal the loss at the heart of the lyrical voice. This kind of remembering could be linked to the problem of the lyric voice itself, a voice that is exploded by the fact that even the most personal belongs to another. If the speaker is the other half of the metaphorical equation swan/poet, we read him only allegorically, sensed behind thoughts of others.

To some extent, this rewriting of the swan is the result of an historical sensibility in which the historical self disqualifies us from immediate self-presence because we are determined by what precedes us and exceeds us—the historical world. Mere reflection is not enough for self knowledge.²¹ But if the belief in historical time is a belief in a neutral and homogeneous medium that allows mutually informative measurements

between one historical moment and another, historical time is also interrogated here in a poetic production of correspondences that double and redouble rather than providing insight.

If we return to Horace, however, we glimpse the beginning of this same interrogation of memory at work in his Swan Ode. Horace's stalled metamorphosis shows the innovation of the Symbolists to be no innovation at all—metaphor always depends on the suppression of one half of the analogy. By literalizing metaphor and making both halves, swan and poet, equally present and center stage, Horace depicts the outrageous discord produced when both halves of a poetic correspondence are given equal weight. This Horace is not the same poet Baudelaire mocks in his letter to Janin, a poet "sans diablerie et sans fureur" [without devilry and fury] (652). Horace's crazy double vision counters Baudelaire's dismissal of him as a poet "dont la lecture ne fait pas mal aux nerfs, comme font toutes ces discordantes lyres modernes" [whose reading does not jangle the nerves, as do all the discordant modern lyres]. His ode, as I mentioned earlier, has done nothing but jangle nerves. Baudelaire's suppression of one half of the metaphorical couplet might even be called classically harmonious by comparison.

Also nascent in Horace is the formulation of a memory that leads to extension and decomposition rather than a recomposition of any true and singular meaning. The classical poet must take on a doubled form — *biformis*—in order to endure. Eternity is not possible without transformation. What is more, poetic immortality, to the extent that it is possible, comes only at the price of bodily transformation, perhaps even decomposition. Horatian remains *do* persist, however fragmentary and obscured, in Baudelaire's "Le Cygne." From here, we are not as far as we imagined from Baudelaire's memory, which, like his notion of time, eats away at the poet's self even as it produces, over the gradual decay of his own life, poetic "fleurs du mal."

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Notes

1. Excellent recent works on the poem include Ross Chambers' *Mélancolie et opposition* (Paris: José Corti, 1987) 167–86; Gérard Gasarian's *De loin tendrement* (Paris: Champion, 1986) 97–120; and Jean Starobinski's *La Mélancolie au miroir* (Paris: Julliard, 1989) 47–78. For a summary of criticism before 1984, see Ross Chambers' "Du temps des 'Chats' au temps du 'Cygne,'" (*Œuvres et Critiques* IX, 2 (1984): 11–25.

2. See for example Victor Brombert's reading of the poem in *The Hidden Reader* (Cambridge: Harvard UP 1988) 97–102.

3. Richard Terdiman, "Searching for Swans: Baudelaire's 'Le Cygne,'" in *Approaches to Teaching Baudelaire's Flowers of Evil*, ed. Laurence M. Porter (New York: MLA, 2000) 115.

4. See Timothy Hampton's "Virgil, Baudelaire and Mallarmé at the Sign of the Swan," *Romanic Review* 72–3 (1982): 438–45. Hampton points to the way in which Baudelaire's "Le Cygne" is situated between its predecessor, Virgil's *Aeneid*, and its descendant, Mallarmé's "La Vierge, le vivace, et le bel aujourd'hui." On the one side of Baudelaire's "cygne," Hampton argues, lies Virgil's poetry of prophecy, in which the poet foresees the founding of a great city, the promise of a presence, on the site of the empty tomb over which Andromache mourns. On the other side lies Mallarmé's swan emptied of the persona of the poet, exhibiting the playful plenitude not of a "je," but of a cygne/signe in which no potential presence, either of a "je" or full meaning, is promised. This argument is only further strengthened, I will show, by looking at Horace's Ode.

5. See J. Tatum's "Non Usitata nec Tenue Ferar," *American Journal of Philology* 94 (1973): 4–25; E.T. Silk's, "A Fresh Approach to Horace II, 20," *American Journal of Philology* 77 (1956): 255–263; and W.R. Johnson's "The Boastful Bird: Notes on Horatian Modesty," *The Classical Journal* March (1966): 272–275. Tatum explains that a translator (Fraenkel) actually tried to omit the most "embarrassing" lines of the poem that describe the poet's transformation into a swan. E. T. Silk also discusses the degree to which the poem is normally censured for its offensive realism, most marked in the "repulsive" scene of metamorphosis. W.R. Johnson writes "Whereas Horace usually subjects his commonplaces to intricate modulation, this one is presented with irritating shrillness" (273).

6. *Horace: The Odes*, ed. Kenneth Quinn (London: Macmillan, 1980). Translation is my own.

7. In a continuation of the complaints listed in note six, G.L.Hendrickson locates the very present metamorphosis as the real "problem" in the poem in his "Vates Biformes," *Classical Philology* 44 (1949): 30–42.

8. See Forbes Irving's *Metamorphosis in Greek Myths*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990).

9. See Deborah Steiner's *The Crown of Song: Metaphor in Pindar*, (London: Duckworth, 1986) 7, for a comparison between the classical and modern conceptions of metaphor.

10. See Tatum for a clarification of this point.

11. Baudelaire, Charles, *Œuvres complètes*, ed. Marcel Ruff (Paris: Seuil, 1968) 97. All translations are my own.

12. See for example Gasarian, *De loin tendrement*, 105.

13. Thanks are due Timothy Hampton for this insight.

14. This piling up is also very much in evidence in Baudelaire's famous Spleen poems.

15. Much work has been done on allegory in Baudelaire. Allegory certainly functions here along de Manian lines by unveiling an authentic temporal destiny (see "The Rhetoric of Temporality," in *Blindness and Insight* [New York: Oxford UP, 1971]). De Man also argues, however, that allegory points to "the loss of reality that marks the beginning of poetic states of mind" (35). I will be arguing, by contrast, that allegory imparts a double vision encompassing both a very material, present reality and a mental state quite different from it. For Baudelaire, I believe, this double vision would imply that poetic creativity stems not from a loss of reality, but from a dissonance between the perception of it and a very different internal vision. Other readings of the poem include that of Nathaniel Wing, who argues that allegory points to the "impossibility of retrieving a lost origin" ("The Danaides' Vessel: On Reading Baudelaire's Allegories" in *Pre-text/Text/Context*, ed. Robert L. Mitchell [Columbus: Ohio State UP, 1980] 141). Locating Horace's Swan Ode in Baudelaire's allegorical swan, however, complicates this notion of irretrievable origin. Reading another poet in Baudelaire's swan also puts into ques-

tion arguments that center around viewing the swan as a mirror-like reflection of the speaker. Starobinski, for example, reads the swan as originating in a "chose vue"—that is, in the personal perception of the speaker. Thus, he suggests, the swan acts as an allegorical reflection of the poet's melancholia (*La Mélancolie*, 68). Leo Bersani writes that the poetic realism of the poem displays a narcissistic projection of the self for which the world serves as mirror (*Baudelaire and Freud* [Berkeley: University of California Press, 1977] 110–112). But if the swan reflects an earlier lyric voice, then allegory actually functions here as a critique of specularity. Jonathan Culler, for example, argues that the swan, even when it seeks something other than itself, finds only itself (*The Pursuit of Signs* [Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1981] 144–45). Culler's insight, if reversed, would apply quite well to the speaker, for whom allegory is precisely the opposite experience: even when seeking himself, he always finds another. I also differ from Derridean readings that, by playing on the French homonym, tend to translate the "cygne" unproblematically as a "signe." The "cygne," rather than engaging in a play of "signs," actually resists linguistic play. Instead, it appears as a materially embodied "cygne" whose movement is limited. My own reading of allegory resembles most closely that of Gasarian (*De loin*), who links allegory to the experience of duality necessary for artistic creation. Gasarian argues that allegory remains the sole possibility for a memorial search that does not lead to a complete forgetting of the self: "A vouloir se réfléchir directement en soi, d'une façon purement narcissique, on est vite plongé dans une hypnose qui mène à l'amnésie, donc à l'oubli de soi." Instead, he writes "il se suspend plutôt à sortir du cadre, excédant son reflet" (*De loin*, 97).

16. Weinberg, Bernard, *The Limits of Symbolism* (Chicago: The U of Chicago P, 1966) 34–35.

17. William Olmstead argues that memories of Baudelaire's earlier poems show up as echoes in the later poems. Inevitably, however, they return as mute, splenetic fragments of a past that cannot be resuscitated in any real way ("The Palimpsest of Memory" *Romantic-Review* 77:4 [1986]: 359–367). Here I am arguing for the same type of progression, only it is incorporated within a single poem.

18. Janet Coleman explains that Averroes describes remembering as an interrupted movement or motion from the known to the unknown (*Ancient and Medieval Memories* [Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1992] 409–410).

19. Critics have tended to privilege either immobility or fertility. Thus, Starobinski opts for the swan as a perfect image of melancholy and immobilization (*La Mélancolie*, 69–70), while Gasarian stresses the creative play of memory, "un surcroît de vitalité [. . .] un besoin excessif d'enchaîner des figures toujours nouvelles" (*De loin*, 250). Allegorical double vision, I would argue, is actually the simultaneous perception of both. Along similar lines, Nicolae Balbut argues that exile points simultaneously to a tragic flaw, a failure to adapt to the present, and to a gift, "the capacity to transform everything into allegory" ("Baudelaire in the Circle of Exiles: A Study of 'Le Cygne,'" *Nineteenth-Century French Studies* 22:1–2 [1993] 123).

20. For excellent work on correspondences in Baudelaire, see Leo Bersani's "Boundaries of Time and Being: Benjamin, Baudelaire," *The Culture of Redemption* (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1990) 47–101. Bersani argues that in absolutizing correspondences between the *moi* and the *non-moi*, this implies "a transgressive extension of the very notion of correspondences, which is no longer limited to either formal analogies or substantive resemblances and which has been stretched to include an identity of being" (70).

21. Barbara Johnson makes a similar claim for privileging metonymy over metaphor in *Défigurations du langage poétique* (Paris: Flammarion, 1979). Metaphor, she argues, implies the recuperation of a fixed self through a process of reflection.