the various means through which two disparate nodes may be connected to one another. The difference, however, is that for Hagberg, composition refers to an indefinite process of combination, permutation and, ultimately, complexification: "Stravinsky said that a blank sheet of music manuscript paper was paralyzing, but once he had an interval, a single pair of notes in place that carried a range of implications and possibilities within themselves, he could fly" (xxx).

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READING BAUDELAIRE WITH ADORNO: DISSONANCE, SUBJECTIVITY, TRANSCENDENCE. By Joseph Acquisto. New York and London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2023. 193 pp.

Virtually no aspect of Theodor Adorno's prodigious body of theoretical writing is more contested today than his late turn to aesthetics. He had written on aesthetic themes since his earliest days, and was initially invited to contribute to the journal of the Institute for Social Research as its in-house musicologist, but it would be in the unwieldy, incomplete *Aesthetic Theory* (1970), jigsawed together from his drafts and published posthumously, that he undertook the most thoroughgoing effort to salvage from aesthetic experience an evasive kernel of truth about the damage done to subjectivity in the modern world. Much of this writing had its roots in embattled debates with Walter Benjamin in the 1930s on the potential of art both to reflect and critique the troubled consciousness of unfettered capitalism's subjects, and the degree to which an overtly politicised art and the ironised, alienated experience of humankind could be made productively interdependent.

For both Adorno and Benjamin, the poetry and prose of Charles Baudelaire in the mid-nineteenth century represented a touchstone for the perceptual convulsions experienced by the city-dweller of the industrial era. In poems that break with the Romantic tradition of entranced contemplation, substituting for it a febrile sense of dissonance, Baudelaire brings to birth a modern aesthetic sensibility that refuses the cultic mythmaking of earlier eras. Now, in a new work that intricately aligns the French poet's writings with the aesthetics of Adorno, Joseph Acquisto, a professor of French literature at Vermont, pursues these continuities with an imaginative vigour and assiduity rarely seen in this field.

Acquisto makes it clear from the outset that his study will not merely situate Baudelaire in his own epoch in a sterile historicist exercise, but will construct a transhistorical constellation by which the poetics of one of his subjects and the philosophy of the other will mutually illuminate each other. There are risks to such an approach, to be sure, not least in that it means negotiating the potential traps that facile anachronism might set, but Acquisto is far nimbler than that. Citing Adorno's declaration in the *Aesthetic Theory* that artworks are 'enigmatic in that they are the physiognomy of an objective spirit that is never transparent to itself in the moment in which it appears', the author emphasises the importance of returning again and again to the artwork, ever anew, to scrutinise its instability rather than resting with a final definitive interpretation. This is one of the ways in which Adorno's aesthetics anticipated the post-structuralist insistence on the endless mutability of the text, but without sacrificing its ethical imperative to convict a faulty world of its untruth.

Acquisto takes three major themes in relation to Baudelaire and Adorno: the expression of dissonance as the prefiguration of modernist technique; the transformation of subjectivity, encompassing the renewal of the subject-object relationship between the poet and his world; and the remodelling of the traditional poetic habit of transcendence, by which the lyric subject incorporates the external world into his or her own aesthetic sensibility.

Journal of Comparative Literature and Aesthetics Vol. 46, No. 4, Winter 2023 [172-174]

At one level, there is an evident philosophical homology between the antitheses of dissonance and harmony and those of truth and falsity. In the French, the term for a discord embraces the very notion of falsehood, as when Baudelaire writes 'Ne suis-je pas un faux accord / Dans la divine symphonie' ['Am I not a discord / In the heavenly symphony', 'L'Héautontimorouménos']. In the *Aesthetic Theory*, Adorno famously states that '[d]issonance is the truth about harmony', by which he intends to charge the artwork that attempts to saturate its view of the world with concordant positivity with being flagrantly deceptive. The dissonant tendencies often to be observed in the later works of such masters as Michelangelo, Rembrandt and Beethoven are less subjective expressions of the fatalism of their individual creators as they are ramifications of the suspect nature of the ideal of harmony as such, its inadequacy. Harmony can only possess truth when it stands revealed as unattainable, and for the spiritual resonances that realisation of its unattainability sets up. In a dictum of *Minima Moralia* (1951), Adorno had stated that the aim of art in the contemporary world should not be to bring order into chaos, but precisely the reverse, that the deadening order of a wholly administered social reality should be subverted with the chaos of dissonance.

These relations are, as always, dialectical. Dissonance achieves its fullest effects and its greatest truth in the context of the harmony that it comes to undermine. Once modern music, for example, was effectively liberated from tonal harmony altogether, the dissonant principle lost its inherent tension, its ability to express menace and conflict. Equally, however, it matters that dissonance is not just subjected to a fatuous resolution with harmony, like the medieval cosmology by which good will always triumph over evil. As Acquisto puts it, 'For Adorno as for Baudelaire, it is not a matter of giving new priority to dissonance by exposing harmony as dissonance but rather of coming to a new understanding of the way the two are imbricated … an articulation of their mutually constitutive relationship'.

On the topic of the transformed subject-object relations made possible by Baudelaire's poetry, in many of the most highly charged lyrics in *Les Fleurs du Mal* (1857), Acquisto is particularly astute. He emphasises the apparently paradoxical postulate in Adorno that what speaks in art is not the author but the artwork itself, which achieves its effects through its interaction with a subject who is prepared to become immersed in it, rather than incorporating it into their own existing aesthetic experience. An adroit analysis of the extraordinary poem 'Le Goût du Néant' in the Coda and Conclusion chapter of this book highlights the process. The poet apostrophises his own spent soul in tones of dejected passivity: 'L'Espoir, dont l'éperon attisait ton ardeur, / Ne veut plus t'enfourcher' ['Hope, whose spur fanned your ardour into flame, / No longer wishes to mount you']. To the morose sensibility of the lyric subject here, hope is not an attitude to be adopted by effort of will, but an external agent, personified as a horse-rider whose spurs roused up his soul to the ardour that inspired him to fight, with a brutality more than faintly suggestive of sexual domination. Now the rider disdains to mount the old nag, who can be left to the slumber of the exhausted brute beast. (Incidentally, I wonder that Acquisto, whose adept translations of other French references inspire confidence, did not seek to modify the occasional *faux accord* of William Aggeler's 1954 translations of *Les Fleurs du Mal*. In the lines quoted above, Aggeler has given the French verb *attisait* as 'fanned'. Spurs are not capable of fanning. 'Stirred' would have been lexically coherent and nearer to the original.)

As with many of these poems, there is a discursive slippage between I and you, often marked by the poet addressing himself by means of an objectifying distance. Another Baudelairean technique is the pre-emptively cinematic move of pulling away from a small detail to a much larger encompassing context, so that in 'Le Goût du Néant', we move from the stumbling, slumbering horse to the engulfment of Time itself like an immense snowfall, and nothing less than the cosmological view – 'Je contemple d'en haut le globe en sa rondeur' ['I survey from above the roundness of the globe'] – in which this 'I', whoever that may be, realises the futility of seeking any kind of existential shelter. The final line invokes the snows again, in a vision of subjecthood being dashed away: 'Avalanche, veux-tu m'emporter dans ta chute?' ['Avalanche, will you sweep me along in your fall?']. It would turn up as one of the epigraphs in *Minima Moralia*.

There are continuities between Adorno's insistence on the need for critical reflection on what art cannot directly say and the technique of Baudelaire's prose poems. What is determined by the concept in aesthetic experience is not in itself conceptual, a theme that was elaborated throughout *Negative Dialectics* (1966). The immaterial, yet visceral, notion of the 'shudder' in Adorno could have been formulated with Baudelaire specifically in mind. It refers back to the fear that an unintelligible natural world once inspired, which was progressively transmuted into the aesthetic effect of the way nature is treated in art. Subsisting in modern artworks is the fear that fear might dissipate, that the truth that primal fear once registered is relentlessly vanquished by the instrumental rationality of Enlightenment thinking, to which art raises an inarticulable protest. In the appearances of artworks, the immediate impressions they make, lies the contradictory unity, the sublation, of what vanishes and what is preserved. Or, as it is expressed in *Negative Dialectics*, 'we despair of what is, and our despair spreads to the transcendental ideas that used to call a halt to despair'. If the world is not redeemable by a force we cannot presently imagine, there is no chance of feeling truly alive in it, but the apparently permanent elusiveness of redemption is what imbued so much modernist art with the theme of hopeless waiting, from Baudelaire to Beckett, and its modal preference for sardonic, mirthless humour. In 'Perte d'Auréole', the poet's halo drops off and rolls into the mud of the city street. His friend urges him to pick it up, but no. Let some other fool purloin it and try it on for size. That would at least be good for a laugh.

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WITHOUT MODEL: PARVA AESTHETICA. By Theodor W. Adorno. Translated by Wieland Hoban. Kolkata: Seagull Books, 2023. 177 pp.

To add to the English language library of Adorno's writings on aesthetics, Seagull Books of India have brought out a translation of a slim miscellany under the title *Without Model*. This was originally published in 1968 as *Ohne Leitbild: Parva Aesthetica*, and is something of a grab-bag of heterogeneous pieces, ranging from high theory to personal reflection and reminiscence. It appeared in the same year as Adorno's rather loosely organised monograph on Alban Berg, and seems to have represented something of a stopgap while the *Aesthetic Theory* was germinating. Many of the items in *Ohne Leitbild* have appeared in one-off English renderings in other anthologies over the years, but they arrive now in their original format, unified by a mostly efficient translation by the seasoned Adorno translator, Wieland Hoban.

The essays 'On Tradition', 'Theses on the Sociology of Art' and 'The Misused Baroque' are Adorno at his most dialectically agile, reflecting on the relation between past and present, and the social effect that the commodification of art has in the administered world. In the first of these pieces, he suggests that relics of past art that are celebrated as components of a monumental heritage are worshipped for their timeless significance, precisely so that nothing will change in the present, 'except through increasing confinement and ossification'. An address to a convocation of architects, 'Functionalism Today', represented a new disciplinary departure, while the previously translated 'The Culture Industry: A Resumé' returns to the now notorious chapter in the *Dialectic of Enlightenment* (1947), in which Adorno and Max Horkheimer convicted the popular entertainment business of colluding in mass deception and stultification. Its findings and categories are robustly defended: '[i]f the masses are unjustly disdained from above as mere masses, it is not least the culture industry that turns them into the masses it then despises'. It is hard to believe that, were he living at this hour,

Journal of Comparative Literature and Aesthetics Vol. 46, No. 4, Winter 2023 [174-175]