

Abstract

“Forget the world, forget the people / And we’ll erect a different steeple”: The Radical Vision of Charles Baudelaire and Jim Morrison’. This quotation is an apt starting point for tracing similarities in Morrison and Baudelaire’s poetics. Fowlie’s work on Rimbaud already suggests the presence of French Symbolism in Morrison’s work, and I would like to explore this further by demonstrating the powerful presence of Baudelaire in Morrison’s verses. There is a need, I believe, to establish firmly Morrison’s role as one of the major heirs to Baudelaire, alongside perhaps Rimbaud, Eliot and Lowell. Both are radical visionaries, ‘a beast caged in the heart of the city’, as Morrison wrote in ‘The Celebration of the Lizard’, and which echoes Baudelaire’s dirtied swan in ‘Le Cygne’. Their verses crackle with energy, from the ‘reservoir of electricity’ of which Baudelaire writes, to the music which Morrison ‘assembled [...] out of swarming streets’. Morrison’s verse react to modernity, and articulate the chaos and confusion experienced by the visionary individual, which traces its origins back to Baudelaire’s frantic, combative and fruitful relationship with Paris. Both men’s verses are haunted, too, by *ennui*—that nervous state which Morrison describes in ‘Freedom Exists’ as being ‘perch[ed] headlong on the edge of boredom’. In short, then, I would like to illuminate the similarities in the ways in which each man lived ‘according to his own daimon’. Works by the poets will include those quoted briefly here, as well as Morrison’s *Paris Journal*, Baudelaire’s *Les Fleurs du Mal* and *Painter of Modern Life*. I may also draw on later writings of Walter Benjamin, Wallace Fowlie and William Burroughs.