Flowers of Evil: Baudelaire and Urban Modernity
• 19th Century France
• Baudelaire biography
• Paris
  • History
  • 19th Century City Planning
• The Flâneur
• “The Swan”
19th Century France
detail from “Liberty Leading the People” by Eugène Delacroix
19\textsuperscript{th} Century France

- French Revolution (1789-92)
- First French Republic (1792-1804)
- Coup - 1799
19th Century France

First French Empire (1804-14)

- Napoleon Bonaparte
- Rose through ranks from Revolution
- Was instrumental in coup
- Gradually took more power
- Crowned himself Emperor in 1804
- Sought to expand French Empire – Napoleonic Wars
- Ultimately defeated at Waterloo 1814

← Emporer Napoleon in His Study at the Tuileries, by Jacques-Louis David (1812)
19th Century France

- Bourbon Restoration (1814-1830)
- July Revolution (1830) – July Monarchy (1830-48)
- Revolution of 1848
- Second French Republic
- Second French Empire (1852-1870)
  - Louis-Napoléon Bonaparte/Napoleon III
Halevant et brisé de fatigue, au milieu
Des plaines de l’Ennuï, profondes et désertes,
Et jette dans mes yeux pleins de confusion
Des vêtements souillés, des blessures ouvertes,
Et l’appareil sanglant de la Destruction !

LXXIX

UNE MARTYRE

DESSIN D’UN MAITRE ENCONNU

Au milieu des flacons, des étoffes lamées
Et des meubles voluptueux,
Des marbres, des tableaux, des robes parfumées
Qui traînent à plus parfumeux,
Dans une chambre tiède où, comme en une secne,
L’air est dangereux et fatal,
Où des bouquets mourants dans leurs cercueils de verre
Exhalent leur soupir final,
Biography

Charles Baudelaire (1821-1869)
• Poet, critic, essayist, translator
• Wealthy Parisian
• *Les Fleurs du Mal (The Flowers of Evil)* 1857
• *Paris Spleen*
Paris

“Paris Street: Rainy Day” by Gustave Caillebotte (1877)
Paris

• Earliest artefacts from 7500 BCE
• Settled by Celtic “Parisii” Tribe in 250-225 BCE
• 52 CE Conquered by Rome
• Clovis I – King of Franks
• Largest city in Europe during Middle Ages
• Beginning in the 19th century Paris went through many changes
Paris
Paris

Modernity

• One important feature of modernity is increased urbanization
• The city and its relationship to people tells us a lot about modernization
Paris

• Following the French Revolution the Louvre—the royal palace—was converted into a museum
• In the Second French Empire, Georges-Eugène Haussmann—a Paris prefect—began renovating Paris often called “Haussmannization”
• Consisted of building new wide (or grand) avenues, parks, and infrastructure
Paris

• The “Haussmannization of Paris” was meant to change Paris into a modern city.

• This photo shows an old Paris alley the Rue de Tirechapl, which was demolished in the construction of the Avenue de l’Opera
Paris

Grand Avenues

• City planning to easy traffic
• Create better flow
• Generate civic culture
• Stimulate the economy

❖ Haussmann’s model of urban planning—particularly of creating grand avenues—was replicated in many other cities
Ringstraße
Vienna, Austria
The Gran Vía
Madrid, Spain
Istiklal Caddesi
Istanbul, Turkey
The Flâneur
detail from "A Street in Alsace" by Constantin Guys
The Flâneur

• Flânerie – (verb) to stroll or wander aimlessly
• Flâneur – (noun) a person who engages in flânerie
The Frâneur

The crowd is his element, as the air is that of birds and water of fishes. His passion and his profession are to become one flesh with the crowd. For the perfect flâneur, for the passionate spectator, it is an immense joy to set up house in the heart of the multitude, amid the ebb and flow of movement, in the midst of the fugitive and the infinite. To be away from home and yet to feel oneself everywhere at home; to see the world, to be at the centre of the world, and yet to remain hidden from the world—impartial natures which the tongue can but clumsily define. The spectator is a prince who everywhere rejoices in his incognito. The lover of life makes the whole world his family . . .

- Baudelaire, from Painter of Modern Life
The Flâneur

The crowd was the veil from behind which the familiar city as phantasmagoria beckoned to the flâneur. In it, the city was now landscape, now a room. And both of these went into the construction of the department store, which made use of flânerie itself in order to sell goods. The department store was the flâneur’s final coup.

As flâneurs, the intelligentsia came into the market-place. As they thought, to observe it—but in reality it was already to find a buyer.

- Walter Benjamin, from “Paris—Capital of the 19th Century” ( 
"The Swan"

Illustration by Yann Legendre from Paris au Pied de la Lettre by Mathilde Helleu
The Swan

Le Cygne = “The Swan”
La Signe = “The Sign”

Homophones – different words that sound exactly the same.
The Swan

Andromache, I think of you! — That little stream,
That mirror, poor and sad, which glittered long ago
With the vast majesty of your widow's grieving,
That false Simois swollen by your tears, (lines 1-4)

***

Andromache, base chattel, fallen from the embrace
Of a mighty husband into the hands of proud Pyrrhus,
Standing bowed in rapture before an empty tomb,
Widow of Hector, alas! and wife of Helenus! (37-40)
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So, before the Louvre, an image oppresses me:
I think of my great swan with his crazy motions,
Ridiculous, sublime, like a man in exile,
Relentlessly gnawed by longing! and then of you,
Andromache . . . (32-37)
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The Swan

I think of the negress, wasted and consumptive, Trudging through muddy streets, seeking with a fixed gaze The absent coco-palms of splendid Africa Behind the immense wall of mist; (41-44)

[France officially ended slavery In its colonies in 1849]
The Swan

Suddenly made fruitful my teeming memory,
As I walked across the new Carrousel.
— Old Paris is no more (the form of a city
Changes more quickly, alas! than the human heart);
I see only in memory that camp of stalls,
Those piles of shafts, of rough hewn cornices, the grass,
The huge stone blocks stained green in puddles of water,
And in the windows shine the jumbled bric-a-brac. (4-12)
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The Swan

Once a menagerie was set up there;  
There, one morning, at the hour when Labor awakens,  
Beneath the clear, cold sky when the dismal hubbub  
Of street-cleaners and scavengers breaks the silence,  
I saw a swan that had escaped from his cage,  
That stroked the dry pavement with his webbed feet  
And dragged his white plumage over the uneven ground.  
Beside a dry gutter the bird opened his beak,
The Swan

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Paris changes! but naught in my melancholy
Has stirred! New palaces, scaffolding, blocks of stone,
Old quarters, all become for me an allegory,
And my dear memories are heavier than rocks.
The Swan

So, before the Louvre, an image oppresses me:
I think of my great swan with his crazy motions,
Ridiculous, sublime, like a man in exile,
Relentlessly gnawed by longing!

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Of whoever has lost that which is never found
Again! Never! Of those who deeply drink of tears
And suckle Pain as they would suck the good she-wolf!
Of the puny orphans withering like flowers!