

RESPONSE TO THE WORK OF CHARLES BAUDELAIRE IN THE LITERARY CRITICISM AND CHRONICLES OF RUBÉN DARÍO: A SPANISH PERSPECTIVE

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1. Introduction

Rubén Darío's association with and contribution to the literary regeneration of Spain's *fin de siglo* —his position of authority in relation to peninsular *modernismo*— has acquired the status of an axiom of Hispanic literary history, as well-founded challenges to this «hecho consagrado» serve to emphasise (Cardwell 1995). The view that Darío was for the young generation of finisecular writers both inspiration and oracle, is epitomised in the following comment made in 1943 in respect of *Los raros*:

Claro está que entre todos esos libros [que anhelaban leer los jóvenes poetas modernistas] los más solicitados eran, sin duda, los del propio Rubén Darío... En una de las primeras cartas que escribió al maestro, Juan Ramón Jiménez, le decía: «Quisiera que me dijese usted dónde podría encontrar *Los raros*...» Y precisamente *Los raros*, como respondiendo a su nombre, eran, en su rareza, una de las guías más preciosas, buscada con ahínco por todos. Cuando su autor, al reimprimirlo en Barcelona el año 1905, lo consideraba de nuevo..., profesaba que en él «restan la misma pasión de arte, el mismo reconocimiento de las jerarquías intelectuales, el mismo desdén de lo vulgar y la misma religión de belleza». Estas dotes perennes atraían a los que eran mozos a la sazón, y de los hombres leídos, acaso por primera vez, en sus páginas, saltaban a las fuentes originales (Díez-Canedo 1975: 222).

The coordinates of interchange and interaction between Darío and his Spanish *confrères* have been plotted with precision by Ghirardo (1943) and Lozano (1968). Their investigations elucidate not only the instances and the extent of this contact, but also trace the diffusion in Spain of the Nicaraguan's writings, including the works of criticism and chronicles. These contain frequent and often extensive references to French literature, and serve thereby to French literature, and serve thereby to recall another literary historical commonplace: Spanish *modernismo's* rela-

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tionship with Romantic and subsequent Francophone writing. Darío's familiarity with such literature (See Mapes 1925) confers upon the Nicaraguan the status of a potentially influential intermediary capable of raising awareness of French literature in Spain and determining the conditions of its reception. The extent to which Darío realized this potential in his critical and other writings is, given his oracular status, a question of significant critical interest, one which it is proposed to address (albeit partially) in this article through an assessment of Darío's contribution to the reception and diffusion in Spain of the work of one French writer: Charles Baudelaire. Baudelaire provides an appropriate subject for examination because his work was neither an object of unconditional and uncritical adulation by the *modernistas* (as was predominantly the case with Verlaine, for example); nor was it so distant from that of later, more popular Francophone writers as to inspire only dispassionate veneration or to be deemed irrelevant to contemporary debate on literature (as was largely the fate of the French Romantics and, eventually, the Parnassians).

2. Baudelaire in Spain

Critical reaction to Baudelaire in Spain begins in 1857, the year which saw the publication of *Les Fleurs du Mal* and the first critical comment on the poems to appear in that country: a Christian reading of «La Cloche fêlée» by the arch-Catholic novelist *Fernán Caballero* (1961:299). This initial phase concludes with the waning of the *modernista* movement at the end of the first decade of the twentieth century, which saw a decline in critical interest in Baudelaire. For this reason, critical comments published after 1912 have not been included for consideration.

Within this first phase, three broad trends of response can be identified. The first comprises the predominantly hostile reaction to the Frenchman's work on the part of Spain's literary establishment, engaged since the 1830s in a determined campaign to safeguard traditional values and to ensure their continued articulation in and through art. Thus Juan Valera dismissed Baudelaire as a mediocre versifier who used shock tactics —particularly an affectation of spiritual anguish and flirtation with satanism— to disguise a lack of genuine literary talent (1942: 609, 707, 829, 908-11, 934, 988, 1205). Emilia Pardo Bazán somewhat more indulgently portrayed Baudelaire as a *brebis égarée* in need of spiritual guidance (1900: 67-68). Traditionalist commentators, it must be said, confined their attention to the morally controversial aspects of the Frenchman's work —gore, obscenity, blasphemy, anguish, or suspect originality. Consequently they presented a somewhat partial, distorted and unrepresentative image of the Frenchman's literary practice and principles.

The second trend had its origins in a form of social Darwinism which emerged from the rise of scientific positivism in Europe in the second half of the nineteenth century. Profoundly influenced by the Degeneration Theory, the exponents of this trend saw in both the form and content of contemporary literature the symptoms of contagious morbid psychology, of atavistic retrogression at a time when evolutionary progress was a social ideal¹. Radicals of this persuasion declared Baudelaire to be insane and denounced his work as a danger to the health of society. The originators of this trend were non-Spaniards: the Italian Cesare Lombroso, author of the seminal *L'uomo di genio*, first published in 1864; and Lombroso's Austrian disciple Max Nordau, whose controversial *Entartung*, published in Berlin in 1892-93, became the prototype for psychological studies of «genius» produced in Spain, such as Pompeyo Gener's *Literaturas malsanas* (1894) and José María Llanas Aguilaniedo's *Alma contemporánea* (1899)².

1.- The Theory of Degeneration was expounded in B.A. Morel's *Traité des dégénérescences* (1857). This theory formed the basis of psychopathology before Freud revolutionised the science of psychology.

2.- First published under the title *Genio e follia* in 1864, *L'uomo di genio* was probably first read in Spain in French translation (1889). No evidence of a Spanish translation exists. Nordau's *Entartung* was translated into Spanish by Nicolás Salmerón y García (1902).

The third trend embodies the critical response of writers associated with the two literary movements which came into being at the close of the nineteenth century: *modernismo* and the Generation of 1898. The first manifestations of this response appeared in the mid-1890s in the works of the Francophile propagandists Enrique Gómez Carrillo and Luis Bonafoux on the one hand, and on the other of writers associated with the genesis of peninsular *modernismo* and *noventayochismo*: José Martínez Ruiz, alias *Azorín*, who first discussed the Frenchman's work in *Anarquistas literarios*, published in 1895 (1947: 183-85); and Rubén Darío, whose essays *Los raros* contain numerous references to Baudelaire. Further allusions in the work of these writers, with the exception of Bonafoux, were made well into the first decade of the twentieth century. The early 1900s also saw critical response by the likes of Valle-Inclán and Unamuno, as well as by younger writers, such as *Helios* group members Gregorio Martínez Sierra and Pedro González Blanco.

Only among these writers is anything approaching a sense of affinity with Baudelaire's aesthetic practice and principles to be found. Collectively, however, their response to the Frenchman's work is characterised by ambivalence. On the one hand, there is acknowledgement of the aesthetic precedents set by Baudelaire's work, of the extent of its influence, and of the salutary character of the changes to which this influence gave rise. Gómez Carrillo acknowledged the radical beneficial influence exerted by Baudelaire's work (1895:313-14) and prescribed it as worthy of emulation (1905:307). *Azorín* described Baudelaire as the greatest poet of the age (1904:3), and declared that only a poetics of artificiality as propounded by the Frenchman could give rise to «real» poetry (1895:183). In a similar vein, Valle-Inclán identified as central to modern literature the Baudelairean practice of synaesthesia (1902:114), while Gregorio Martínez Sierra hailed the Frenchman's poetic practice as the aesthetic antidote to the lifeless verse of Spain's «cerebral» literary establishment, represented by Núñez de Arce (1903:30-31). On the other hand, this favourable response is tempered by a sense that Baudelaire's work did not offer in all respects a model that was particularly suitable for emulation. Gómez Carrillo (1895:319-20) and Pedro González Blanco (1903:69) indicated that the aesthetic example set by Baudelaire had been superseded by that of a younger generation of French writers, while Unamuno went so far to describe the Frenchman's poems as «atrocities» (1903:48). It is in relation to this ambivalence—a tension between identification with and repudiation of the work of Baudelaire—that the literary criticism and chronicles of Rubén Darío offer themselves for consideration.

3. Underexploited Resources

Darío's familiarity with Romantic and subsequent French literature was extensive, as has been indicated above. Erwin K. Mapes refers to the «lectures prodigieuses» prompted by the Nicaraguan's interest in French literature, which intensified with the Nicaraguan's arrival in Chile in 1887 (1925:13). This interest is reflected, as has already been noted, in the numerous references to French literature in Darío's literary criticism and chronicles. Among these are to be found allusions to *Les Fleurs du Mal*, *Petits poèmes en prose*, *Notes nouvelles sur Poe*, the art criticism, *Les Paradis artificiels*, and the *Journaux intimes*, suggesting extensive acquaintance with Baudelaire's work in the original³. Furthermore, the Nicaraguan's use of elliptical or

3.- Darío's critical writings and chronicles contain between 1896 and 1912 some forty-three references to Baudelaire or his work. Of these, a number of allusions attest to acquaintance with specific works or compositions. There are references to particular poems — 'L'Albatros' (*OC*, II, 281 [1896/1901/1905]), 'Au lecteur' or possibly 'Épigraphie pour un livre condamné' (*OC*, II, 441 [1896/1901/1905]), 'Les Phares' (*OC*, I, 395 [1906]), 'Le Goût du néant' (*OC*, I, 694 [undated]), 'Sonnet pour s'excuser . . .' (*OC*, I, 792 [1907]), the 'cat poems' (*OC*, III, 617 [1903]), the banned poems (*OC*, II, 373, [1896/1901/1905])— as well as to the poetry in general. There are allusions to three of the prose poems — 'Any where out of the world' (*OC*, II, 644, *OC*, I, 694, *OC*, III, 912 [written 1900, published 1901], *OC*, III, 528), 'Enivrez-vous' (*OC*, II, 342 [1896/1901/1905]), and 'Le Vieux Saltimbanque' (*OC*, III, 250 [1901]). There is a reference to Baudelaire's role in the diffusion of Poe (*OC*, II, 250

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metonymical forms of address and circumlocutions when referring to Baudelaire, and his coining of the adjectival form «baudelairiano», imply an assumption of at least some knowledge of Baudelaire on the part of the reader.

It is interesting to note at this juncture that certain allusions to Baudelaire circulated more than once, in the form of second or further editions. *Los raros* (although initially something of a rarity in Spain, as Jiménez's enquiry indicates) was published first in 1896 (Buenos Aires, Barcelona), and subsequently in 1901 (Paris) and 1905 (Barcelona). *España contemporánea*, which appeared in 1901 (Paris), was republished in 1907 (Paris). *Tierras solares* appeared in 1904 (Madrid) and 1905 (Madrid) (Lozano 1968: 142-43). The significance of this «recycled» critical opinion will be discussed at a later stage in this enquiry, in anticipation of which it is appropriate to signal publication dates in references to Darío's critical writings.

Darío's familiarity with Baudelaire's work was uncommonly extensive within a Spanish context, and one could be forgiven for assuming that this would engender a sophisticated and qualitatively significant critical response. The reality, however, is quite different. In the first place, all allusions to Baudelaire's work in Darío's critical writings figure in a purely incidental capacity, in the course of discussion of other writers. There is no sustained or substantial treatment of the Frenchman's work in its own right. Secondly, references to Baudelaire constitute only the most elemental form of critical response, amounting to little more than cursory comparisons or critical shorthand, as in the description of Maurice Rollinat as a «cultivador de "flores del mal" [que c]antaba en cabarets y salones versos baudelairianos con música suya» (OC, I, 283 [1906]). Another example is to be found in an essay of 1911, in which it is reported that Catulle Mendès «[h]a hecho cosas como Hugo, como Leconte de Lisle, como Banville, como Baudelaire, como Verlaine, como los parnasianos, como los simbolistas, como los decadentes» (OC, I, 487). Yet another instance occurs in a reference to Théodore Hannon in *Los raros*. On this occasion the allusion to Baudelaire is even more engimatically subjective and at the same time takes for granted a reader's familiarity with a stock image of the poet:

Todo, para este sensual, es color, sonido, perfume, línea, materia. Baudelaire hubiera sonreído al leer este terceto:

Le sandringham, l'Ylang-Ylang, la violette
de ma pâle Beauté font une cassolette
vivante sur laquelle errent mes sens rodeurs

(OC, II, 432 [1896/1901/1905]).

Another example involves the phrase «les paradis artificiels» which on three of the four occasions it appears is used merely as a euphemism for escapist inebriation without reference to the essay so titled. Thus the inebriation of hedonism is compared to that «de aquellas que buscan alivio u olvido de sus dolores refugiándose en los peligrosos paraísos artificiales» (OC, III, 89 [1901/1907]). Similarly, in two autobiographical accounts, the Nicaraguan has recourse to the term in description of himself as a young man in Buenos Aires «buscando por la noche el peligroso encanto de los paraísos artificiales» (OC, I, 116 [1912]), and in relation to his fear of death: «¡Y cuántas veces me he refugiado en algún paraíso artificial, poseído del horror fatídico de la muerte!» (OC, I, 211 [1909]). The sole reference to the work bearing this title occurs in a dis-

[1896/1901/1905]), and another connecting Baudelaire to Poe (OC, I, 283 [1906]). The art criticism is represented in two appropriations of the term 'grandes machines' from the essay on Delacroix (OC, III, 403 [written 1900, published 1901], OC, III, 177 [1901/1907]), and in references to Baudelaire's evaluations of Clésinger (OC, I, 367 [1906]) and Charlet (OC, I, 780 [1907]). *Les Paradis artificiels* is mentioned four times: OC, I, 211 (1909), OC, I, 532 (undated), OC, I, 116 (1912), and OC, III, 89 (1901/1907). Allusions to the *Journaux intimes* are found in OC, II, 373 (1896/1901/1905), OC, I, 223 (undated), and OC, III, 715-16 (1903).

cussion of Thomas de Quincey's *Confessions of an English Opium Eater*, for which Baudelaire is given credit for making known in Europe (OC, I, 532 [1911]). A similar transformational appropriation occurs in respect of the title of the prose poem «Any where out of the world». The poetry of Eduardo Carrasquilla Mallarino is observed to display «tendencias a lo exótico, al japonismo; hay obsesión sensual y carnal; hay el insaciable deseo baudelero de marchar siempre, de ir siempre lejos, aun fuera del mundo: "Any where out of the world"» (OC, II, 644 [undated]); while of Julián del Casal it is noted that:

el veneno, la morfina espiritual de ciertos libros... le hicieron llegar a sentir el deseo del anondamiento, la partida al país del misterio, o a cualquiera parte que no fuese este pequeño mundo: Any where out of the world! (OC, I, 694 [undated]).

A nostalgic account of a visit to Granada provides another opportunity to coin the expression:

He dejado Granada con pena... Es uno de los pocos lugares de la tierra en que uno quería permanecer, si no fuese que el espíritu tiende adelante, siempre más adelante, si es posible fuera del mundo, anywhere out of the world (OC, III, 912 [1904/1905]).

A declaration formulated in 1900 and published in 1901 in *Peregrinaciones* —«Nunca, sino en los viajes, se puede comprender mejor el pequeño poema de Baudelaire: *Any where out of the world*» (OC, III, 528)— endorses Darío's association of the expression with a kind of compulsive wanderlust, albeit born of spiritual unease, which arguably carries more positive connotations than those which it acquires in the original prose poem. Expressions such as «el insaciable deseo de marchar siempre», «la partida al país del misterio», and «el espíritu tiende adelante, siempre más adelante», evoke a sense of quest or curiosity which is at variance with the aspiration to escape or secure release from the world implicit in Baudelaire's composition. Ironically, the reference to Julián del Casal also mentions «el deseo del anondamiento» —an allusion to «Le Goût du néant»— which evokes a desire very similar to the wish to be «n'importe où hors du monde».

Thirdly, Darío's allusions to Baudelaire's work not only lack critical sophistication, but are also singularly unoriginal. Baudelaire is cast in what was at the time an all too familiar role, that of the *poète maudit* obsessed with vice and sin, given to blasphemy and worshipping Satan⁴. This not only gives a distortedly reductive impression of the thematic and aesthetic scope of the Frenchman's work, but also recalls, somewhat unfortunately, the disproportionate emphasis which hostile commentators placed on these features.

Finally, no mention or at best passing allusion is made to Baudelaire in contexts where one might reasonably assume reference to be apposite, and notably in respect of qualities carrying positive associations for Darío: *rareza*, *dandisme*, as indices of the poet's spiritual superiority, the elitism of the poet, and martyrdom in the quest for beauty. Evidence of this tendency is particularly evident in *Los raros*. The following description might well have corresponded to Baudelaire:

Rarísimo. Es, ni más ni menos, un poeta. Estas palabras que se han dicho respecto a él, no pueden ser más exactas: «Es un supremo refinado que se entretiene con la vida como un espectáculo eternamente imprevisible, sin más amor que el de la belleza, sin más odio que a lo vulgar y lo mediocre»... «se reconoce la distinción, la aristocracia espiritual y la magnífica realeza de ese anarquista»... «Fue de los primeros iniciadores del simbolismo»... Vive en un sueño. Es raro, rarísimo, ¡un poeta!» (OC, II, 393-401 [1896/1901/1905])

4.- Of the thirteen references to Baudelaire's 'satanism' and of a further thirteen to aspects of vice or sin in the Frenchman's work which are made by commentators associated with *modernismo* or the *Generación del 98*, some eight and nine respectively are to be encountered in the critical writings or chronicles of Darío.

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These qualities, however, are attributed not to Baudelaire, but to Laurent Tailhade. In a similar fashion, *Rachilde* (*OC*, II, 372-73 [1896/1901/1905]), Jean Moréas (*OC*, II, 364 [1896/1901/1905]) and Léon Bloy (*OC*, II, 319-22 [1896/1901/1905]) are selected to represent the rejection of *Bourgeois* values and socio-political commitment.

The significance of Darío's critical response to Baudelaire would, then, appear to reside precisely in its analytical poverty.

4. Ethics/Aesthetics

Darío's critical writings give no explicit indication as to why Baudelaire's work should have been so treated. Nevertheless three elements of the Nicaraguan's critical writings provide a basis for informed speculation. The first concerns the characterisation of Baudelaire and his work. The second is Darío's response to the work of other writers whom Darío perceived to be cast in a similar mould to Baudelaire. The third is evidence of existential and aesthetic principles which are configured as acceptable and desirable.

With regard to the first factor—the image of Baudelaire constructed in Darío's critical writings—it has already been indicated that the Frenchman was cast preeminently in the guise of *poète maudit*, as one of those who «llevan en el larario de sus emociones ese *coïn maladif* de que hablaba Goncourt» (*OC*, III, 598 [1901]). Within the parameters of this general definition, Darío's response concerns itself especially with Baudelaire's «obsession» with evil, vice and corruption and with the «satanic» aspect of his poetry. Allusions to the morally controversial dimension of Baudelaire's work accompany discussion of similar aspects in the work of other writers, in a relationship of mutual elucidation. Thus a reference to the «condemned» poems (those expurgated from the 1857 edition of *Les Fleurs du Mal*) in an essay on *Rachilde*—«Ella... ha bebido en el mismo vaso que Baudelaire, el Baudelaire de las poesías condenadas» (*OC*, II, 373 [1896/1901/1905])—appears in the midst of a vivid evocation of the authoress, described as «una mujer extraña y escabrosa, de un espíritu único esfingicamente solitario en este tiempo finisecular . . . un «caso» curiosísimo y turbador... satánica flor de decadencia, picantemente perfumada, misteriosa y hechicera y mala como un pecado» (*OC*, II, 365 [1896/1901/1905]). The same can be said of an allusion to «Au lecteur» or possibly to «Épigraphe pour un livre condamné» appearing in the chapter devoted to the *Comte de Lautréamont*, Isidore Ducasse:

¡Y el final del primer canto [de los *Chants de Maldoror*]! Es un agradable cumplimiento para el lector el que Baudelaire le dedica en las *Flores de Mal*, al lado de esta despedida: Adieu, viellard, et pense à moi, si tu m'as lu. Toi, jeune home, ne te désespère point; car tu as un ami dans le vampire, malgré ton opinion contraire. Et comptant l'acarus Sarcopce qui produit la gale, tu auras deux amis (*OC*, II, 441 [1896/1901/1905]).

The presence of a copy of *Les Fleurs du Mal* in Henri de Groux's studio is attributed to the painter's «malas compañías» (*OC*, I, 392 [1906]). Baudelaire's influence is deemed to account for the presence in later poets' work of «vagas ideas oscuras, relámpagos de satanismo» (*OC*, II, 392 [1896/1901/1905]) and «las decoraciones incógnitas del pecado» (*OC*, I, 643 [undated]). In an essay entitled «La labor de Vittorio Pica», dated 1907, a comparison between Baudelaire and the artist Félicien Rops provides a similar pretext:

Los frontispicios simbólicos, los dibujos incisivos, la cruel interpretación de vida bajo formas visionarias, la obsesión de la lujuria y de la muerte, como en su amigo Baudelaire, anuncian al belga Félicien Rops.

Qui n'est pas un gran [sic] prix de Rome,
mais dont le talent est haut comme
la pyramide de Chéops,

como dijera de él el autor de las *Flores del Mal* (*OC*, I, 762).

As late as 1911, the Nicaraguan noted an affinity between the work of Baudelaire and Englishman Arthur Symons «por el lado del pecado» (OC, I, 533). Of eleven allusions to specific poems from *Les Fleurs du Mal* to be found in Darío's critical writings, no less than four involve 'Les Litanies de Satan' (OC, II, 335, 337, 424, 434 [1896/1901/1905]). A similar preponderance is evident in the examples, provided above, of the 'obsession' with vice, sin, and 'satanism'.

The representation of Baudelaire as a devil-worshipping *poète maudit* provides a link with the second of the three factors which may account for Darío's reaction to the Frenchman's work, for it is in this guise that he is compared to other writers in whose work Darío detects the expression of a similar strain of *malaise*. In this context, Baudelaire's work is invoked only by way of comparative illustration, as a kind of reference point. Thus it is said of the poet Théodore Hannon that '[J]ambién, como el autor de *La Flores del Mal*, le persigue el spleen' (OC, II, 431 [1896/1901/1905]). That a comparison is made, however, is sufficient to justify the assumption that what is said at some length and in relative detail of the writers with whom Baudelaire is compared implicitly holds true for Baudelaire as well. This inferential connection is significant, because Darío's discussion of these writers goes beyond mere acknowledgement of the form in which they express their spiritual unease, to reveal an attitude of disapproval. The Nicaraguan's characteristically *modernista* fascination with *lo raro* is tempered by reluctance to endorse the morally controversial manner in which 'la irremediable y divina enfermedad de la poesía' (OC, II, 388 [1896/1901/1905]) expresses itself in these cases. Darío's response to *Les Chants de Maldoror* might have come from the pen of Valera: 'No aconsejaré yo a la juventud que se abreve en esas aguas, por más que en ellas se refleje la maravilla de las constelaciones' (OC, II, 435-36 [1896/1901/1905]); while Jean Richepin's *Les Blasphèmes* is described as '[e]se vuelo de estrofas condenadas [que] precisa el exorcismo, la desinfección mística, el agua bendita, las blancas hostias, un lirio del santuario, un balido del cordero pascual' (OC, II, 337 [1896/1901/1905]). On other occasions recourse is had to terminology used by the likes of Cesare Lombroso and Max Nordau in their purportedly scientific studies of the insanity of men of genius. Jean Richepin's poems are said to reflect a 'demencia vertiginosa' (OC, II, 335 [1896/1901/1905]). Rachilde is described as 'un caso curiosísimo y turbador'; her *Monsieur Vénus* is 'un libro de *demonómana*', and the characters in her books are '*casos de teratología psíquica*' (OC, II, 367 [1896/1901/1905]) (My italics). Whether or not Darío embraced the theories of the psychopathology of genius—which is unlikely—is immaterial. What matters here is the appropriation by the Nicaraguan of terminology which had been used against the mid—to late nineteenth—century literary *avant garde*. The excesses of the *poètes maudits* therefore acquire negative connotations in Darío's writings.

That Darío's critical writings should treat with disapproval a tendency of which Baudelaire was portrayed as the supreme exponent offers an explanation—one explanation, at least—as to why the Nicaraguan may have had little more to say about the Frenchman's work than he did. This contention finds support in the reasons for Darío's disapproval of this manifestation of the *sentido artista*, which is the third factor which has a bearing on the Nicaraguan's response to Baudelaire.

Darío's critical writings give evidence of dissatisfaction with literature which failed to disassociate itself from the expression of spiritual malaise in favour of a more optimistic, affirmative and regenerationalist perspective. A comment first published in 1896 describes escape from the downward spiral of spiritual abjection and the consequent enfeeblement of the moral sense as 'ciertamente consolador y vigorizante' (OC, II, 443 [1896/1901/1905]). Darío's critical writings go beyond this position, however, to advocate a vital idealism, and optimism based on 'fe', 'entusiasmo' and 'ideales'. In 'Historia de mis "Abrojos"', a retrospective assessment of his first published work, Darío explains away his early pessimism as a mere phase of spiritual and aesthetic transition, a temporary aberration of the moral consciousness which is attributed to the adolescent's intense but imperfect appreciation of the human condition. Rediscovery of faith and

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hope is configured in terms of the Christian religious concepts which are familiar currency in Darío's equation of art with religion:

El libro [*Abrojos*] adolece de defectos y aun entonces no estaba yo satisfecho de él como primer libro, como tarjeta de entrada a la vida literaria de Santiago, no era muy a propósito. Ante todo, hay en él un escepticismo y una negra desolación que, si es cierto que eran verdaderos, eran obra del momento. Dudar de Dios, de la virtud, del bien cuando aún se está en la aurora, no. Si lo que creemos puro lo encontramos manchado; si la mano que juzgamos amistosa nos hiere o nos enloda; si enamorados de la luz, de lo santo, de lo ideal, nos encontramos frente a la cloaca; si las miserias sociales nos producen el terror de la vergüenza; si el hermano calumnia al hermano; si las estrellas tiemblan arriba por el infierno de abajo..., ¡truenos de Dios!, ahí estáis para purificarlo todo, para despertar a los aletargados, para anunciar los rayos de la justicia.

Pedro [Balmaceda, su editor], en su delicadísimo artículo, en que el cariño guía la pluma, llama a los *Abrojos*, 'el libro de Job de la Adolescencia'. Hoy, por más que los desengaños han destruído muchas de mis ilusiones, adorador de Dios, hermano de los hombres, amante de las mujeres, pongo mi alma bajo mi esperanza.

*Maintenant, je voit [sic] l'aube . . .
L'aube! c'est l'espérance!*

Al son de la gloriosa música del arpa me quedo con David (*OC*, II, 158-59 [1889]).

This might be interpreted as a recantation, if similar views were not to be encountered in subsequent writings. Admiration expressed in *Los raros* for the work of Léon Bloy is a case in point:

Este artista —porque Bloy es un grande [sic] artista— se lamenta de la pérdida del entusiasmo, de la frialdad de estos tiempos para con todo aquello que por el cultivo del ideal o los resplandores de la fe nos pueda salvar de la banalidad y sequedad contemporáneas. Nuestros padres eran mejores que nosotros, tenían entusiasmo por algo; buenos burgueses de 1830, valían mil veces más que nosotros. Foy, Béranger, La Libertad, Víctor Hugo, eran motivos de lucha, dioses de la religión del Entusiasmo. Se tenía fe, entusiasmo por alguna cosa. Hoy es el indiferentismo como una anquilosis moral; no se aspira con ardor en nada, no se aspira con alma y vida a ideal algunos (*OC*, II, 322 [1896/1901/1905]).

The equation drawn here between art and religion, recalls the pronouncement, in the chapter devoted to Poe in *Los raros*, that faith was a quality 'que debiera poseer... todo poeta verdadero' (*OC*, II, 269 [1896/1901/1905]), and echoes Darío's definition of art as 'el más bello de los sacerdocios' (*OC*, II, 362 [1896/1901/1905]).

Comments such as these may be taken as endorsing the view of Sonya A. Ingwersen, according to whom:

Darío was an anti-clerical, but never anti-Christian, indeed, his work occasionally attests to a deep devotion to the Christ... and... that Darío's interest in religious heterodoxy, which was first awakened in the middle years of his adolescence, endured throughout his mature years, although there is no direct evidence that he ever considered himself to be anything other than Christian (1986:117).

Darío's beliefs are not a matter for concern here, and indeed contemporary literary theory would have us treat with caution the predisposition to read works—even non-fictional works—as unproblematic reflections of their authors' intentions and beliefs. Nevertheless, Ingwersen's comments serve as a reminder that on the level of critical discourse, an opposition of faith, hope and enthusiasm to pessimism, despair and sin is a constant in Darío's critical writings.

Darío's affirmation through art of an aesthetic ideal couched in conventional religious terms, and censure of literature which did not conform to this principle might lead one to assume that his response to Baudelaire's work had merely taken up where earlier detractors had left off, were it not for one factor: the Nicaraguan's censure of those who follow Baudelaire's example is tem-

pered by an indulgence which reveals comprehension of their motives. Satanism and the cult of vice are acknowledged to be expressions, albeit misguided, of a modern artistic sensibility, and so reflections, albeit distorted, of an exquisite *sentido artista*. Thus indulgent 'recuperative' explanations are provided for the excesses of Lautréamont:

Se trata de un loco, ciertamente. Pero recordad que el *deus* enloquecía a las pitonisas, y que la fiebre divina de los profetas producía cosas semejantes: y que el autor 'vivió' eso, y que no se trata de una 'obra literaria', sino del grito, del aullido de un ser sublime martirizado por Satanás (*OC*, II, 440 [1896/1901/1905]);

and of Jean Richepin:

Y he aquí que aunque la protesta de hablar palabras sinceras manifestada por Richepin, sea clara y franca, yo —sin permitirme formar coro junto con los que le llaman cabotín y farsante—, miro en su loco hervor de ideas negativas y de revueltas espumas metafísicas a un peregrino sediento, a un gran poeta errante en un calcinado desierto, lleno de desesperación y del deseo y que por no encontrar el oasis y la fuente de frescas aguas, maldice, jura y blasfema (*OC*, II, 336 [1896/1901/1905]).

True to form, however, Darío's critical writings contain only one attempt to explain Baudelaire's own impieties in this way, and this is done in a manner which is more reminiscent of an excuse than of a justification of the kind provided in respect of other writers: 'Baudelaire era profunda y dolorosamente católico, y si escribió algunas poesías *pour épater les bourgeois*, no osó nunca a Dios' (*OC*, II, 433 [1896/1901/1905]). The cursory character of this explanation serves to underline the marginal position of Baudelaire's work in the aesthetic scheme configured in Darío's critical writings. The Frenchman's work is deemed to be sufficiently characteristic of the trend in question to provide a basis for effective comparison, but appears to lack the qualities which might have induced Darío to engage in more sustained justification.

5. A Textual Reading

The image of Baudelaire's work presented in Darío's critical writings is, then, limited to a dimension which in the ideological context of the critical writings invokes an unfavourable response. This in turn explains the relative poverty of critical comment. Baudelaire's work does not appear in Darío's critical writings as a source of interest in its own right, but rather plays a supporting role in the discussion of other writers. References to the Frenchman's work in Darío's writings occur in the context of debate concerning the nature and function of art, and the spiritual principles which should motivate literary creation. Within this frame, references to Baudelaire serve to illustrate the direction that literature should *not* be taking. It is therefore appropriate to refer to the presence of the Frenchman's work in terms of the functional status which allusions to Baudelaire acquire within the critical discourse of which they form part. The functional character of the allusions is further emphasised by their reiteration across a period of time: Baudelaire's work is depicted in essentially the same guise in Darío's critical writings at the end of the first decade of the twentieth century as it is in the mid- 1890s. Moreover, this uniformity of response throughout the period in question is reinforced and accentuated through rediffusion, in the form of second and (as in the case of *Los raros*) subsequent or simultaneous impressions or editions of the works containing allusions to Baudelaire. The dates which accompany references to the *Obras completas* in the present study serve to identify these 'recyclings' of critical opinion, as well as to signal the persistent homogeneity of response.

The functional character acquired by Darío's critical response to Baudelaire (and indeed by the similarly stable aesthetic principles which frame the response) serves to determine how it may be read critically. If during the period examined the content, the character and focus of allusions to Baudelaire had changed, the need to explore this change would usher into contention a reading from a traditional humanist perspective, whereby the allusions would be treated as a

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reflection of the Nicaraguan's evolving beliefs and aesthetic. The homogeneity and consistency of the references to Baudelaire, however, allow them to acquire the status of 'atemporal' constants within more-or-less unchanging parameters of debate, and consequently invite the rejection of 'Dariocentric' speculation, ultimately inconclusive, about the 'real' beliefs and motives behind the critical comments, in favour of a textual reading which places the focus of attention unequivocally on the reception of Baudelaire.

The feasibility of reading Darío's response to Baudelaire *textually* facilitates investigation of the place occupied by the Nicaraguan's comments within critical reaction to Baudelaire in Spain. This is because Spanish critical response to Baudelaire, by virtue of its achronological character, also invites a textual reading. Devoid, as it were, of temporal progression or modification, the *modernistas'* response consists largely of constants which defy description in terms of differentiated stages in the development of literary history, appearing rather as inflections of perspective within a debate on poetics, the parameters of which remain largely unchanged. As such, the corpus of critical comments invites description in synchronic rather than diachronic terms, as I have argued elsewhere (Hambrook 1993: 59-60).

Within this frame the significance of Darío's contribution to the composition and orientation of critical response to Baudelaire in Spain can be described with relative clarity. Darío's comments publicise a wider range of the Frenchman's literary, critical and theoretical production than *fin-de-siglo* commentators in general, but fail to cover the range of critical issues raised in respect of Baudelaire's work, to achieve the originality of some comments, or to attain the depth and breadth of discussion achieved by certain other commentators. Compare, for example, Darío's anecdotal reiteration of cliché and commonplace with the alertness to contemporary aesthetic issues explicit in contexts such as Valle-Inclán's discussion of the centrality of Baudelairean synaesthesia to contemporary literature (1902: 114), Martínez Sierra's perceptive distinction between the 'cerebral' poetry of Núñez de Arce and the 'imaginative' poetry of Baudelaire (1903: 30-31), and Gómez Carrillo's account of the revolution in literary form and language exemplified by the Baudelairean prose poem (1905: 307-11); or the critical dilettantism of the Nicaraguan's cursory references to 'el albatros, el *prince des nuages* (sic) de Baudelaire' (*OC*, II, 281 [1896/1901/1905]) and 'cierto pequeño poema de Baudelaire, el de los viejos juglares' (*OC*, III, 250 [1901/1907]) with the empathetic insight of Azorín's paraphrastic readings of 'L'Albatros' in *Diario de un enfermo* (1901: 687) and of 'Le Vieux Saltimbanque' (1904: 3). In quantitative terms, however, the significance of Darío's response to Baudelaire is far greater. Not only do references to the Frenchman appear throughout Darío's critical writings of the *fin-de-siglo* period in Spain—roughly the mid- 1890s to the end of the first decade of the twentieth century—but they also constitute a significant number of the contexts of comment. Of seventy-seven instances of critical allusion to Baudelaire by Spanish *modernistas*, *noventayochistas*, and associated commentators between 1893 and 1912, no less than forty-three are attributable to Darío. The effect on the corpus of critical comments as a whole is to depress the qualitative mean: the brief, rather unoriginal and unpenetrating character of Darío's references to Baudelaire serve to counterbalance negatively the more nuanced, innovative response of other commentators.

6. Conclusion

Notwithstanding the esteem in which Darío was held by the writers of Spain's *fin-de-siglo* literary revival, the Nicaraguan's response to Baudelaire does not appear to have constrained the *modernistas'* and *noventayochistas'* readings of the Frenchman's work. The majority of these writers discovered qualities and dimensions to which Darío's comments do not allude. Moreover, many of the Spaniards' observations display an appreciation of Baudelaire's work which extends far beyond any gesture of token indulgence with which one might be prepared to credit the Nicaraguan.

The discrepancy between Darío's response to Baudelaire and that of his Spanish congeners reflects the extent to which Spain's *fin de siglo* was an aesthetic transition zone, where progressive writers, in their reaction against *lo viejo*, affirmed communality of purpose in such a way as to belie the heterogeneity and even ambivalence of their collective horizon of expectations. Darío's response to Baudelaire, although articulated within the parameters of the *modernista* cult of beauty, is prompted essentially by moral considerations which recall an earlier form of critical practice and principles; while in the response of other commentators it is possible to discern the application of criteria which anticipate subsequent developments in literature and criticism (The culmination of this favourable trend within the first phase of critical reaction to Baudelaire in Spain is Juan Ramón Jiménez's rediscovery and canonization of the Frenchman's work at the end of the first decade of the new century⁵).

In seeking to elucidate Darío's contribution to the construction and diffusion of an image of Baudelaire's work in Spain, speculation as to what the critical observations studied reveal of their author has been intentionally avoided. This resolution is logical, given the focus of enquiry. However, it is also methodologically desirable, in that it encourages a form of textual pragmatics, based on the 'facts' of critical response, in which 'la obra [crítica] crea textualmente su propio mundo interno de referencia' (Villanueva 1994: 15), as opposed to a dubious kind of humanism which aspires through speculation and conjecture to attribute to the critic a set of pre- or extra-textual belief and motives.

The need to maintain the focus of enquiry upon the textual construction of an image of Baudelaire's work (rather than on a hypothetical biography of Darío) means that contextual factors —general declarations of aesthetic principle, Darío's response to other writers— have been considered only in so far as they facilitate pursuit of this purpose. Consequently it would not be appropriate to infer that the conclusions drawn here in respect of response to Baudelaire's work necessarily apply beyond the confines of this context. Darío's response to *modernismo's* 'French sources' (from Romantic and subsequent literature) in general is quite a different issue, and one which, as far as I am aware, has in recent years been touched on only incidentally. For this reason it remains a subject for systematic critical examination, and also because much concerning the question of French 'influence' in Spanish *modernismo* still remains to be elucidated.

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5.- Jiménez 'rediscovered' Baudelaire's work approximately a decade after his first contact with it, when he was able to undertake a more enlightened reading (Gullón 1958: 100). The influence of this experience is reflected in epigraphs from poems by Baudelaire found in *Melancolía*, a collection written between 1910 and 1911 (Jiménez 1961: 1433, 1445).

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