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# Translation and Translatability in Intersemiotic Space

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# Translations, adaptations, quotations from Baudelaire's poetry into metal music: an anti-alchemy?

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## ABSTRACT

This study examines how metal musicians appropriate Baudelaire's poetry, one of the favorite sources of metal lyrics' intersemiosis. We will consider several levels of intersemiosis, from the reference to the literal quotation, including the music inspired by Baudelaire's life, inquiring what metal music, which is both counter-cultural and popular, does to a great classic of French poetry. Moreover, we intend to look closer at Baudelairean intersemiosis in the work of non-French-speaking metal musicians. When they retain the original French text, the lyrics reflect the vocalist's relation to the foreign language. Eventually, the translation processes are all brought together in those cases involving an adaptation into the band's own language. Some of the songs we analyze belong to the most extreme genres of metal. Given the French post-Romantic poet's controversial reception and his sense of scandal, this partiality is far from being surprising. We propose using Baudelaire's theory of correspondences to explain the adaptation of his verses into weighty, violent notes, and sounds. Finally, the case of Baudelaire's reception allows us to analyze the many translations at stake when a contemporary music genre such as metal incorporates literary works into its lyrical material.

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[...] *Il est des parfums frais comme des chairs d'enfants,  
 Doux comme les hautbois, verts comme les prairies,  
 — Et d'autres, corrompus, riches et triomphants,  
 Ayant l'expansion des choses infinies,  
 Comme l'ambre, le musc, le benjoin et l'encens,  
 Qui chantent les transports de l'esprit et des sens.*

'Correspondances' in *Les Fleurs du Mal*  
 (Baudelaire 2019[1857])<sup>1</sup>

## 1. Introduction

In the early seventies, in the United Kingdom, out of the depths of a metalworking company in the working-class city of Birmingham, a group of workmen and musicians – called Black Sabbath – turned the nascent genre of hard rock music into metal. They tuned their guitars to a lower pitch, pushed the saturation and distortion of their amplifiers to the limit, developed virtuosity in each of their instruments, and proceeded to explore the darkest dimensions of music. According to musicologist Robert Walser (1993: 10), heavy metal was born in those years; the designation was later reduced to 'metal' to encompass the numerous subgenres that emerged over the years.

In the present-day field of 'popular' music, metal holds a specific and ambiguous place. It is classified as popular music, and, as such, as opposed to classical music or even serious music – a music 'from below' which cannot reach the music 'from above.' (Molino 2007: 670) Belonging to the larger family of rock music genres, metal music "from the art institution's point of view [...], is denied any aesthetic legitimacy, on the pretext that it does not meet the criteria of complexity and deepness, of formal creativity and reflexive consciousness towards its own artistic dimension" (Malfettes 2000).<sup>2</sup> This is precisely why we intend to examine this music in relation to its lyrics, particularly when they claim to be poetic.

Simultaneously, metal music does not fit within the mainstream of "so-called entertainment music" (Nattiez 2007: 29). Except for headliners, such as Metallica or Iron Maiden, or the occasional hype by major radio stations, metal music proclaims to be

<sup>1</sup> "[...] There are perfumes as cool as the flesh of children, / Sweet as oboes, green as meadows / — And others are corrupt, and rich, triumphant, / / With power to expand into infinity, / Like amber and incense, musk, benzoin, / That sing the ecstasy of the soul and senses." *Correspondences* (Baudelaire 1954) All the verses cited here in English are taken from this reference translation.

<sup>2</sup> Original quotation: "Du point de vue des institutions artistiques, une musique comme le rock se voit refuser une légitimité esthétique sous prétexte qu'elle ne répond pas aux critères de complexité et de profondeur, de créativité formelle et de conscience réflexive de sa propre dimension artistique." (Malfettes 2000: 13) My translation in the text.

underground, or at least, a counter-cultural music genre, rather than a 'popular' one, taking 'popular' in the restricted sense of "industrialized entertainment for the masses" (Lindberg 2005: 24). "Heavy metal musicians erupted across the Great Divide between 'serious' and 'popular' music, between 'art' and 'entertainment,' and found that the gap was not as wide as we had been led to believe," summarized Robert Walser (1993: 106).

Indeed, the inclusion of 'serious' art references in the field of metal music, not only through the use of classical techniques, patterns or gestures, as widely proved by Walser but also through the literary inspiration of the lyrics, is an evidence of this will to bridge the gap. Several recent academic studies – which, after having been long confined to the relationship of literature to classical music, progressively opened to popular music (starting with jazz, then rock, followed by counter-cultural music genres, such as rap<sup>3</sup> or metal) – inventory numerous cases of intertextuality within metal song lyrics.<sup>4</sup> Among them, the name of French poet Charles Baudelaire often emerges, and, interestingly enough, in various metal subgenres and not only in the work of French-speaking bands.

Bridging the gap between classical and popular music studies, The Baudelaire Song Project (2015), led by Helen Abbott and Mylène Dubiau, based at the University of Birmingham, drew our attention. The authors carefully inventory all the songs referring to a poem by Charles Baudelaire, in every possible music genres and across all decades. It is striking to notice the massive presence of various metal subgenres in their list (one hundred and twenty-four songs). In an article about 'Black Metal Baudelaire,' the project authors underline the following:

Metal music is an essential genre for Baudelaire's reception, and extreme sub-genres such as death metal and black metal provide prominent examples of bands inspired by Baudelaire's darker texts. It seems to be an obvious link, perhaps even a cliché. When Baudelaire writes about the devil, evil, or death, he's bound to attract black metal musicians. But the reality is more complicated than that. (Abbott and Ardrey 2018)

Our article examines some of the reasons for these apparent collisions between the Baudelairean and metal worlds and the numerous intersemiotic metal songs referring to the French poet and trying to explore this complexity. Therefore, we intend to analyze those (anti-) alchemical processes at stake when 'translating' Baudelaire's poetry into

<sup>3</sup> We think for example of the work by Lori Burns and Alyssa Woods, 'Words, Music, and Images in the Hip-Hop Intertexts of Eminem, Jay-Z, and Kanye West' (Burns and Lacasse 2018).

<sup>4</sup> Among them, Jean-Philippe Ury-Petes, who focuses on the highly intersemiotic work of Iron Maiden (2009), Camille Béra in the specific field of black metal (2018) or Brian Bardine and Mike Elovaara in their book *Connecting Metal to Culture: Unity in Disparity* (2017).

metal music. By ‘translating,’ we include several degrees of adaptation and transmutation. Starting from Gérard Genette’s definition of intertextuality (1982: 13), we will focus on the ‘relation of copresence’ between a poem made of words and the new material created by metal musicians, which, in this case, is a song: a fabric made inextricably of both music and lyrics. Tiphaine Samoyault’s lucid classification of intertextual processes (2001) will guide our observations. We decided to exclude instrumental adaptations of Baudelaire’s poems, as these implicate an indeed interesting, albeit different intersemiotic process. In such cases, there is no explicit semiosis in common between the music work and its literary reference, and the ‘translation’ bases itself on what Etienne Souriau calls “aesthetical atmosphere equivalence” (1969: 31).<sup>5</sup> On another level of translation, we wish to examine the linguistic dialogism occurring when a non-French speaking band borrows the words of a Baudelaire poem, and, in an advanced case when they sing a translated version of the verses in another language. A case of interlingual translation that Genette categorizes as a form of hypertextuality, and more specifically as “the most visible, and certainly the most widespread form of transposition” of a text (1982: 293).<sup>6</sup>

From amongst the ample and variegated metal music related to Charles Baudelaire, we have selected eight cases that exemplify Baudelairean intersemiosis in metal songs. They were chosen from the vast corpus of our research in progress,<sup>7</sup> where we seek to cover every possible subgenre and encompass bands of various nationalities and levels of audience. Our present selection is a sample of French and non-French speaking bands, and we were careful to include several female singers and lyricists within it.

Of the eight songs in our Baudelairean corpus, three belong to the black metal<sup>8</sup> or post-black metal subgenre (Amesoeurs, Gorgoroth and Rotting Christ); two belong to what is called symphonic (Therion) or gothic (Theatres des Vampires) metal (the latter being a formerly melodic black metal band); one belongs to death metal<sup>9</sup> (Misanthrope), another to deathcore<sup>10</sup> (Gravity) and the last to industrial metal<sup>11</sup> (Radium Valley). Except for symphonic metal and, to some extent, industrial metal, the sample comprises

<sup>5</sup> Original quotation: “*équivalence d’atmosphère esthétique.*” (Souriau 1969: 31) My translation in the text.

<sup>6</sup> Original quotation: ‘*La forme de transposition la plus voyante, et à coup sûr la plus répandue, consiste à transposer un texte d’une langue à une autre [...].*’ (Genette 1982: 293) My translation in the text.

<sup>7</sup> I am currently working on a PhD dissertation on ‘The place and function of literature and classical culture in metal music’ at University of Toulouse II Jean-Jaurès, France.

<sup>8</sup> Black metal: an extreme metal subgenre which characteristics are a quick drum play, a dark atmosphere, bloody, occult, or even Satanist lyrics, and high-pitched screamed voices.

<sup>9</sup> Death metal: an extreme metal subgenre born in the eighties, which characteristics are brutal playing and lyrics, a quick tempo and low-pitched, saturated, growled vocals.

<sup>10</sup> Deathcore: a crossover between hardcore punk and death metal resulting in a brutal association of simple melodies, double pedal drums, and screamed or growled vocals.

<sup>11</sup> Industrial metal: a metal subgenre born at the end of the eighties, which includes synthesizers, Electro-music rhythms, and a symmetric tempo along with powerful vocals.



the most underground subgenres in the metal landscape. This is especially the case for black metal, which has always claimed, as Camille Béra notes (basing her analysis on the title of a 2013 Darkthrone album, "The Underground Resistance"), to remain "a surviving music genre, resisting the assaults of an 'all-digital' world" (Béra 2018).<sup>12</sup>

## 2. *Les Fleurs du Mal*: from verse to scream

First of all, although it is quite indisputable that we are in the presence of an intersemiotic phenomenon when a metal band deals with Charles Baudelaire's works, we must immediately interrogate the kind(s) of intersemiosis at stake. There are several ways by which metal bands to express their Baudelairean inspiration. For example, Swedish symphonic metal band Therion makes a simple allusion in their album's title *Les Fleurs du Mal* (2012). The work's title belongs to what Genette (1982: 10) and many authors after him refer to as the *paratext*. Françoise Escal's explanation of paratexts in music is relevant to our argument:

Therefore, the title appears as an announcement and summary of the work's 'content' [...]. However, if we understand the cognitive, referential function in the broad sense of the words, if we consider that the title, every verbal title gives information about the work, then the title of the musical work is always more or less referential. It works as a 'shifter and modulator' for the listening process. (Escal 1990)<sup>13</sup>

*Les Fleurs du Mal*, as a title for a metal music album, does indeed give several hints and leads regarding its atmosphere, themes, and influences before any listening experience. It first sets the listener within a French world, although Therion is a Swedish band widely listened to in Europe. It also places the work within an atmosphere which is both transgressive and aesthetic – *Fleurs du Mal* is generally translated as 'Flowers of Evil' – one which underlies many works of metal. This contrast particularly suits the subgenre to which Therion belongs, "the oxymoron of symphonic metal" in the words of Cyril Brizard's work (2011), also often referred to as *gothic* – an adjective frequently applied to Baudelaire himself – symphonic metal.<sup>14</sup> Thirdly, this album's title invokes a literary, poetic, and post-Romantic universe for the listener.

<sup>12</sup> Original quotation: "[...] un genre musical survivant, résistant aux assauts du "tout numérique."" (Béra 2018: 10) My translation in the text.

<sup>13</sup> Original quotation: 'Dès lors, le titre se donne comme annonce et sommaire du "contenu" de l'œuvre [...]. Mais si on entend au sens large la fonction cognitive, référentielle, si on considère que le titre, tout titre verbal donne une information sur l'œuvre, alors le titre de l'œuvre musicale est toujours plus ou moins référentiel. Il fonctionne comme "embrayeur et modulateur" d'écoute.' (Escal 1990: 294) My translation in the text.

<sup>14</sup> About Baudelaire as a gothic figure, see Baddeley (2002) and Eudeline (2005); about the links between metal bands and gothic aesthetics, see the works by Brian Bardine (2009, 2015).

We shall compare these expectations with the work itself. Unlike the songs in most other albums by Therion, these have French lyrics, which endows them with a form of exoticism for the numerous non-French-speaking listeners of the band. However, the other promises which the title seemed to announce are not kept: there are no further mentions of Baudelaire or any other poet, and the songs - most of them covers - do not have any particular gothic or post-Romantic atmosphere, especially for the French listener who recognizes several pop songs from the sixties and early seventies, including France Gall's *Poupée de cire, poupée de son* and *Les sucettes* or Léonie's *En Alabama* and *Wahala Manitou*. In this album, the band has seemingly opted for flowers' lightness rather than their evil character, at least initially. Both the metal cover and the Baudelairean reference in the album's title also comprise translation processes that bring the original pop songs towards possible darker meanings.

Therion repeats the process four years later with a short album called *Les Épaves* (*Scraps*), after a collection of twenty-three 'forgotten' poems by Baudelaire, including the six censored pieces published in 1866, one year before his death. Here again, we confront a simple reference, which does not imply a "textual heterogeneity" (Samoyault 2001: 35) but suggests an *ethos*, one that underpins this short work's status as the place in which some untethered or ill-fitting songs ran aground.

However, other metal bands offer a deeper level of intersemiosis regarding Baudelaire's poetry. We will focus on two songs as examples: Amesoeurs' *Recueillement* (2009) and Gravity's *La Dernière empreinte* (2017). Both songs carry out what Gérard Genette (1982: 8) defines as "the most explicit and literal form" of intertextuality, i.e., the quotation. Emilie Thium, the lyricist and vocalist of French deathcore band Gravity, chose to include the last two stanzas of Charles Baudelaire's *L'Horloge* (The Clock), without any textual modification but intertwined with her lyrics.

In fact, the whole song is built so as to distinguish Baudelaire's quotation from the rest of the lyrics: as Tiphaine Samoyault (2001) notes with respect to quotations, "the heterogeneity is clearly visible between the cited and the citing texts."<sup>15</sup> Emilie Thium's verses are rhythmically irregular from a formal aspect, contrasting with Baudelaire's alexandrines: "Here the seconds stridulate. / I'm counting time's steps in the dark / And I fall over."<sup>16</sup> She also uses a simple negative form, "*Et laisses sur mes mains / Que l'odeur du passé*" (omitting the first part of the negative 'ne'). However, the main contrast is audible: whereas Emilie sings her lyrics with a distorted, saturated voice, typical of the deathcore subgenre to which her band belongs, a male voice reads aloud Baudelaire's stanzas, in a spoken voice to which a vintage sound effect is applied – naively recalling the chronological gap between the nineteenth-century poet and the deathcore

<sup>15</sup> Original quotation: '[...] l'hétérogénéité est nettement visible entre le texte cité et le texte citant.' (Samoyault 2001: 34) My translation in the text.

<sup>16</sup> Original quotation: '*Ici, les secondes strident. / Je compte les pas du temps dans l'ombre / Et je bascule.*' (Gravity 2017: 'La Dernière empreinte') My translation in the text.

band. The poetic text thus appears as clearly heterogenic, not only semiotically but also temporally. After this recitation, a brief silence ensues in the song, followed by two full minutes of an epic instrumental part – except for some distant, unintelligible chorus – as if it were impossible for the vocalist to go on straight after the poet's words.

In the record booklet, Baudelaire's verses are appropriately highlighted, appearing in quotation marks, italic typeface, and a mention of the source: "– Charles Baudelaire, *Les fleurs du mal*, *L'Horloge* –". This information entails a written "contract of hypertextuality" (Malfettes 2000: 85), once again pointing out the strangeness of these verses compared to the rest of the lyrics. Inspired by Genette's categorization of transtextuality, musicologist Serge Lacasse developed the concept of transphonography, which he accordingly divides into interphonography, paraphonography, etc., (Lacasse 2018). In this system, the record booklet belongs to the category of paraphonography: "At home," notes Serge Lacasse, "the listener might find his or her listening experience enhanced by the CD cover and liner notes, which often interact with the audio content (in some specific contexts, of course)" (2018: 36). In the case of Gravity's *La Dernière empreinte*, the paraphonographic material provides the listener with information – or a confirmation of the verses' origin for those who would have identified Baudelaire – just as it draws attention to the quotation and pays homage to the hypotext.

All the same, a genuine unity is maintained in the song, thanks to its single and obsessive topic: the passage of time. Margaret Miner identifies Time in Baudelaire's work as "the sole predator who never risks anything and never operates at a loss," especially in the poem *The Clock* (1998: 40). In Gravity's *La Dernière empreinte*, Time is personified by Emilie Thium ('time's steps') and Baudelaire ('Time is a greedy player')<sup>17</sup> and its omnipresence resounds both in the homonymic word-play *Tant/temps* in Gravity's lyrics and their musical arrangements, introducing and closing the song with the haunting sound of a clock (Baudelaire's *Horloge*). A single, final verse by the lyricist is screamed several times at the end of the song: "Because I walked at your side"<sup>18</sup> which might have been addressed as much to Time as to Baudelaire himself, for the song is a real re-creation inspired by the poet's stanzas, and enclosing them.

Our third example concerns the most tangible form of quotation one might imagine: the *mise-en-musique* of a complete poem, Baudelaire's *Recueillement* (Meditation), with only minor textual variation. The choice is significant since the particular poem is not a regular part of the *Les Fleurs du Mal* collection – neither in its first or second editions. It was initially published in 1866, in the literary review *Le Parnasse Contemporain*, and included in the posthumous edition of *Les Fleurs du Mal*, in 1868. Just as *L'Horloge*, it was a new piece written by Baudelaire for his second edition, after the trial. It is interesting that the metal band Amesoeurs focuses on the poem *Recueillement* which is

<sup>17</sup> Original quotation: 'Le Temps est un joueur avide' (Baudelaire 2019: 237)

<sup>18</sup> Original quotation: 'Car j'ai marché à tes côtés' (Gravity 2017: 'La Dernière empreinte'). My translation in the text.



absent from most versions of the collection. Moreover, *Recueillement* falls within the scope of an intersemiotic tradition, especially in classical music. The Baudelaire Song Project (2015) counts fifty-seven classical settings of this single piece, including versions by Claude Debussy (1889), Louis Vierne (1919), and Marguerite Canal (1940).

Distant in both time and genre from this illustrious tradition, Amesoeurs is a French black metal band established in the early 2000s. Black metal is a singular, extreme sub-genre of the metal family, born in the late eighties in Norway and taken up in subsequent years in Europe and then worldwide, tending and claiming to remain underground. Fabrice Canepa sums up its characteristics thus: “a very lo-fi production, a hollow, high-pitched guitar sound humming with saturation, a very quick drum play inspired by Punk music, a harsh, grating, and threatening voice.” (Canepa 2017)<sup>19</sup> As for the genre’s lyrics, they are naturally dark, mostly despairing and not uncommonly inspired by literature. Several French black metal (or rather post-black metal) bands, like Amesoeurs, “are especially partial to making references to Symbolist poems by Baudelaire, Mallarmé or Verlaine,” as Camille Béra has noted (2018).<sup>20</sup>

Examining more closely the adaptation of *Recueillement* (Amesoeurs 2009), we find that Baudelaire’s sonnet is untouched, except for the addition, in the last tercet, of the translation of the twelfth and thirteenth verses into German, spoken as an echo. This use of the German language is a typical effect within contemporary gothic music.

Although “music can often model very closely on the poem, only overemphasizing the declamation” (Souriau 1969),<sup>21</sup> this is not to say that this song, as Stéphane Malfettes observed in relation to his own research corpus, “offers an accompanying music which would provide an illustrative background to literary texts” (2000).<sup>22</sup> The band chooses to clearly separate the last tercet from the rest of the poem, whereas the two quatrains and the two tercets of sonnets are traditionally read like separate cores of meaning. In this version, only the last tercet is read aloud in Audrey Sylvain’s clear voice (from 4’49 to 5’20), whereas the rest of the poem is vocalized by Stéphane ‘Neige’ Paut’s full, screaming voice. Rhythmically, syncopation also stresses the transition (at 4’12).

Nevertheless, Amesoeurs’ choice makes sense, considering the enjambment between verses eight and nine, which prevents the reader from separating them: “My Grief, give me your hand; come this way // Far from them.”<sup>23</sup> Furthermore, the song’s

<sup>19</sup> Original quotation: “[...] production très lo-fi, guitares au son creusé, tout en aigus et bourdonnantes de saturation, jeu de batterie très rapide inspiré du punk, voix âpre, grinçante et menaçante” (Canepa 2017: 5,2) My translation in the text.

<sup>20</sup> Original quotation: “[...] une forme de référence aux poèmes symbolistes de Baudelaire, Mallarmé ou Verlaine dont certains musiciens de Black metal sont particulièrement friands” (Béra 2018: 276) My translation in the text.

<sup>21</sup> Original quotation: ‘Ainsi la musique peut se calquer souvent de très près sur le poème, simplement en exagérant la déclamation’ (Souriau 1969: 31) My translation in the text.

<sup>22</sup> Original quotation: ‘Ces disques ne proposent en effet pas des musiques d’application qui serviraient de fond sonore illustratif aux textes littéraires.’ (Malfettes 2000: 90) My translation in the text.

<sup>23</sup> Original quotation: ‘Ma Douleur, donne-moi la main ; viens par ici, // Loin d’eux.’ (Baudelaire 2004: 203).

end fades into silence, responding to Baudelaire's dark and fateful final verse: "Listen, darling, to the soft footfalls of the Night."<sup>24</sup> In this case, the intersemiotic quotation, as literal it may be, provides a reinterpretation – as the semiotic translation from verses to music necessarily implies atmosphere, rhythm, and choices of voicing. As Pierre Boulez asserted in *Point de repère* (1981: 195) about his vision of a poem's *mise-en-musique*: "My principle is not to restrict myself to the immediate comprehension, which is one of the forms – perhaps the least rich? – of a poem's transmutation. I regard as too restrictive the will to limit it to a sort of 'reading in/with music' [...]"<sup>25</sup>

### 3. Taking Baudelaire to other lands

The interpreters of the two examples, which we analyzed most closely, however, belong to the same country and have the same mother tongue as Baudelaire himself. Another step in the intersemiotic process is when a territorial transfer is added to the art of transposition. A form of dialogism appears: "the speech of another is introduced into the author's discourse," to quote Bakhtin's definition of the concept (1981[1935]: 303).

The Greek band Rotting Christ, also belonging to the black metal subgenre, offers such an interesting case, with their version of *Les Litanies de Satan* (The Litanies of Satan) (2016). The song uses a large portion of Baudelaire's verses in French, until the couplet "You whose broad hand conceals the precipice / From the sleep-walker wandering on the building's ledge"<sup>26</sup> but it leaves the end aside (six stanzas and the Prayer are missing). The lyricist, Sakis Tolis, chooses not to repeat the refrain "O Satan, take pity on my long misery!" between each stanza, as in Baudelaire's version. He begins with it, then places it thrice in-a-row in the middle of the song, and finally twelve times in the end, offering a pronounced gradation. The lyric invocation "O Satan" also frequently doubles the refrain. Abbott and Ardrey analyze Rotten Christ's choice in their article for the Baudelaire Song Project:

These bands de-emphasize the refrain "Ô Satan, prends pitié de ma longue misère!" (O Satan, take pity on my endless misfortune!). The line appears 15 times in Baudelaire's poem, interspersed by short verses of just 2 lines. In the black metal songs, the refrain is either suppressed altogether or is put in a different place and repeated only a few times instead. They have gone for an alternative take on the characteristic black metal ideology of rebellion against religion. (Abbott and Ardrey 2018)

<sup>24</sup> Original quotation: "Entends, ma chère, entends la douce nuit qui marche." (Baudelaire 2004: 203)

<sup>25</sup> Original quotation: "Mon principe ne se borne pas à la compréhension immédiate, qui est une des formes – la moins riche, peut-être? – de la transmutation du poème. Il me semble trop restrictif de vouloir s'en tenir à une sorte de 'lecture en/avec musique' [...]" (Boulez 1981: 195) My translation in the text.

<sup>26</sup> Original quotation: "Toi dont la large main cache les précipices / Au somnambule errant au bord des édifices" (Baudelaire 2019: 182).

The vocalist who provides most of the singing is a guest, Michael ‘Vorph’ Locher, a French-speaking member of the Swiss band Samael. Almost all the text is spoken aloud, in a clear, distinctive voice, except the repeating refrain at the end, which is screamed by Sakis Tolis along with ‘Vorph.’ Baudelaire’s verses are brought into stark relief by this slow, martial, restrained music arrangement; quite a rarity in a subgenre where vocals are usually hardly intelligible.

There is undeniably a linguistic relocation in this work. The permanent lyricist chooses to work on a language which he does not master, preferring to delegate the vocals rather than, for example, resorting to a translation. In doing so, he attaches himself to the poem’s original language, to its sonority, to what it symbolizes to him. This imparts to the album an undeniable degree of exoticism and originality. But, more is at stake. The French language and culture are sometimes perceived abroad as rich and stimulating, according to Isabelle de Courtivron. Greek author Vassilis Alexakis remembers that “when he was younger, he was convinced that arts were more developed in France than in Greece and criticized the boring study of Greek antiquity and classical Greek that was imposed on him when he was young.” (de Courtivron, Huston and Alexakis 2009: 154) Therefore, it is not surprising that the Greek black-metal musicians of Rotting Christ are keen on using this foreign culture in their work, and especially Baudelaire’s poetry, which is very well-known in Greece through translation.

At the end of the song, Sakis Tolis’s accent is slightly audible in the backing vocals he performs. This detail, along with the multilingual songs surrounding *Les Litanies de Satan* on the album (mostly in Greek and English but also in Latin, Hebrew or Sanskrit) suggest a form of Bakhtin’s “dialogic nature of plurilingualism, where languages correspond to each other and enlighten mutually.” (Bakhtin 1978: 222) Amongst other hypothesis and in the light of the album’s title, *Rituals*, we can suppose that Rotting Christ chooses those languages because they consider them as conducive to mystic invocation, either because they are ancient (Latin, Hebrew, Sanskrit) or because of the intertext itself (Baudelaire’s French).

This album is a strong example of intersemiotic dialogue in metal, as confirmed by a look at the credits in the liner notes: along with Sakis (Athanasios) Tolis, the lyric writers include Charles Baudelaire for *Les Litanies de Satan* (a title completed by the work’s name *Les Fleurs du Mal*), William Blake for *For A Voice Like Thunder* (a recitation of a Prologue intended for *King Edward the Fourth*), and Greek poet Giannis Kakoulidis for *Του Θάνατου*. Michael Locher is not the only guest singer, as the English vocals from Blake’s poem are sung by British metal singer Nick Holmes, and the traditional Indian voice melodies by Kathir (a member of Rudra, a Singaporean avant-garde metal band defining their music as ‘Vedic metal’). In addition to this multilingualism, various voices can thus be heard, which corresponds to the very definition of Bakhtinian dialogism.

Another case of Baudelairean intersemiosis, using the same poem as intertext, raises the notions of dialogism and translation: the song *Litani til Satan* by Norwegian band Gorgoroth (2000). Named after a grey-elvish word – one of the languages created by John R. R. Tolkien – meaning ‘dreadful horror,’ the band is “maybe the one which best embodies the black metal spirit: true to the genre’s roots, unfailingly Satanist, refusing every musical or stylistic compromise” according to Fabrice Canepa (2017).<sup>27</sup> Their interest in Baudelaire’s poem is rather unsurprising, as Satan and satanism are the primary and almost exclusive topic of their lyrics.<sup>28</sup>

As announced by its title, the entirety of Gorgoroth’s intersemiotic song is in Norwegian. Genette considers translation as “the most noticeable form of transposition, and certainly the most widespread one” (Genette 1982).<sup>29</sup> In fact, in Gorgoroth’s version, the text is slightly adapted to retain rhymes in every couplet – perhaps involving a professional translation found in a Norwegian edition of *Les Fleurs du Mal*? The original refrain is shortened to three words, “*Satan vis miskunn*” (Satan is merciful). The lyrical interjection “O” is missing, which is not an insignificant change. In their ‘Summary analysis of *Litanies de Satan* black metal settings in Other Languages,’ Abbott and Ardrey interpret these changes in this fashion: “By leaving out the second half of the line, they draw attention to the poem’s reimagining of the Kyrie Eleison.” (2017)

As in Rotting Christ’s version, only twelve of the fifteen couplets remain, and the final prayer is missing. This can be explained by the will to shorten quite a solemn and, in both cases, monotonous recitation, maintaining the listener’s attention. Still, we also hypothesize a little interest of both bands in the final prayer. Moreover, lyricist Roger Tiegs, alias ‘Infernus,’ chose to reduce the refrain frequency, which can only be heard twice in the song. We also notice the use of the word *giljotin* (guillotine), originating from French, to translate ‘scaffold.’ This choice can be heard as a reminder of the poem’s origin, introducing further dialogism. However, there is no mention in the record booklet that the lyrics are a translation from Charles Baudelaire, no ‘contract of hypertextuality’ at all, which places this version in the intertextual category of plagiarism: “a literal, but non-explicit borrowing” (Samoyault 2001).<sup>30</sup> The French writer and his poem are thus translated and transported into another culture, into another’s voice, nearly vanishing during the transfer, and unknown to many of the band’s listeners.

<sup>27</sup> Original quotation: “[...] peut-être le groupe qui incarne le mieux l’esprit black metal : fidèle aux racines du mouvement, indéfectiblement sataniste, refusant tout compromis musical ou stylistique.” (Canepa 2017: 63) My translation in the text.

<sup>28</sup> See Camille Béra (2018) and Jean-Michel Lemonnier (2013) about the forms and meanings of satanism in Black metal music.

<sup>29</sup> Original quotation: “La forme de transposition la plus voyante, et à coup sûr la plus répandue [...]” (Genette 1982: 293) My translation in the text.

<sup>30</sup> Original quotation: “[...] le plagiat comme ‘emprunt littéral, non-explicite’” (Samoyault 2001: 35) My translation in the text.

#### 4. An inverted alchemy?

Are the classics translatable into popular music? Indeed, the question of reception is crucial in these transposition processes. There is neither dialogism nor intersemiosis if it remains hidden from the listener. We have already touched upon the function of paraphonography (Burns and Lacasse 2018) in the elucidation of references. Moreover, many metal listeners expect them and seek them out, knowing their favorite genre's high intermedial potential. As Robert Walser noted, in his analysis of Iron Maiden supporters: "It is not surprising [...] that many of Iron Maiden's fans study the band's sources, actually buy and read the books referred to in the song lyrics [...]." (Walser 1993: 160)

However, what happens to Baudelaire during this translation – or transmission? The work of Stéphane Malfettes (2000) will be of much help in answering these questions. He created the concept of 'double deterritorialization' to explain the transformation at stake when a classic work is used as an hypotext by popular music:

Nowadays, the literary text has a material and cultural territory of its own: it is present in the form of a book and belongs to the most prestigious artistic spheres. So, when a rock disc becomes a reception structure for literature, the text is 'deterritorialized' twice: it changes both its semiology and its symbolic universe. (Malfettes 2000)<sup>31</sup>

Indeed, as we suggested in our introduction, bringing Baudelaire into the metal music universe is transposing him into a kind of music that is both popular and unpopular. We are dealing with a musical genre that is non-serious and non-legitimate in the eyes of the academic world, and, at the same time, a genre which enjoys remaining on the fringe, unrecognized by the majority of music listeners. Moreover, its aesthetic elements are all but intuitive and repel numerous listening attempts: saturation, noise, screams and growls, darkness, violence, horror.

For all these reasons, we suggest considering Baudelairean intersemiosis in metal music as inverted alchemy. Baudelaire conceives of his poetry as an alchemical process, as expressed by the very last verse which he wrote for a – later abandoned – project of an Epilogue to the 1861 edition of *Les Fleurs du Mal*: "You gave me your mud, and out of it I made gold."<sup>32</sup> One of his poems is a perfect example of this process, and one of the most famous: *A Carcass* (*Une charogne*) earned Baudelaire the reputation of 'Prince

<sup>31</sup> Original quotation: "Le texte littéraire possède, de nos jours, un territoire matériel et culturel qui lui est propre : il est présent sous la forme d'un livre et appartient aux sphères artistiques les plus prestigieuses. Ainsi, lorsque les disques de rock deviennent des structures d'accueil de la littérature, les textes sont doublement 'déterritorialisés': ils changent à la fois de sémiologie et d'univers symbolique." (Malfettes 2000: 5) My translation in the text.

<sup>32</sup> Original quotation: "Tu m'as donné ta boue et j'en ai fait de l'or." (Baudelaire 2019: 322)



of Carcasses.' This poem describes, in a long, detailed, and realistic series of stanzas, the decomposing corpse encountered during a walk with his beloved, "at a turn in the path".<sup>33</sup> Florence Vatan reminds us that "as [Baudelaire] explained in a Preface project, he proposed to 'extract *beauty* out of Evil' because this was a field where he could express a new and singular voice." (Vatan 2015)<sup>34</sup> So, Baudelaire's poetry is turning mud into gold, Evil into Flowers. The metal music bands bring the Flowers back to Evil, the gold back to mud – or is it the gold back to metal?

To return to *The Litanies of Satan*, there is talk of metal in the couplet: "You whose clear eye sees the deep arsenals / Where the tribe of metals sleeps in its tomb."<sup>35</sup> Unsurprisingly, this poem is the most frequently used in Baudelairean intersemiotic metal songs (twenty-five references in The Baudelaire Song Project). The "tribe of metals" explicitly belongs to the realm of Satan. In the original text, as in this translation, the word 'metals' (*métaux*) is plural. However, in Gorgoroth's version, it is the singular *metall*, and not the plural *metaller*, which is used – what is more, it comes at the end of the couplet, which stresses the word even more. This is undoubtedly not fortuitous. It reminds us how conscious and proud most metal musicians feel to belong to this genre (it is thus anything but rare to find the word 'metal' in the titles and lyrics, or reference to 'metal hymns').

As it happens, the emblematic poem *A Carcass* also underwent an intersemiotic metal adaptation. This is carried out by the French Industrial metal band Radium Valley (2014). In a track named *Interlude 2*, the band invited a story-teller – another dialogic process, with a voice appropriate to the album's title *Tales from the Apocalypse* – to read aloud the whole poem, accompanied only by the sounds of insects, recalling Baudelaire's verse "The blow-flies were buzzing round that putrid belly."<sup>36</sup> In fact, in this case, as in most of the Baudelairean intersemiotic songs we have listed, the poet's words are not so much turned into metal. For example, in Gorgoroth's album *Incipit Satan*, a variety of voice techniques are employed by vocalist 'Gaahl' (Kristian Eivind Espedal) and some guest singers, showing a real virtuosity in the field of screamed and full voices. However, *Litani til Satan* is the only piece sung in a clear, solemn, and deep voice. Everything happens as if Baudelaire's words mattered, were precious and meaningful enough to remain untouched in this work of metal, even when surrounded by distortion, monstrosity, and extremes.

<sup>33</sup> Original quotation: 'Au détour d'un sentier [...]' (Baudelaire 2019: 60)

<sup>34</sup> Original quotation: 'Comme il s'en explique dans un projet de préface, il s'est proposé 'd'extraire la beauté du Mal', car il s'agissait d'un domaine où il pouvait faire entendre une voix neuve et singulière.' (Vatan 2015: 2) My translation in the text.

<sup>35</sup> Original quotation: 'Toi dont l'oeil clair connaît les secrets arsenaux / Où dort enseveli le peuple des métaux' (Baudelaire 2019: 182)

<sup>36</sup> Original quotation: "Les mouches bourdonnaient sur ce ventre putride" (Baudelaire 2019: 60)

In this light, we would like to mention one notable intersemiotic and dialogical case in our corpus. Again, *Les Litanies de Satan* is the poem that triggered the creative process. We owe this version to an Italian Gothic metal band called Theatres des Vampires, probably referring to Anne Rice's *Interview with the Vampire*, which features a Parisian theatre troupe of vampires. It is hard to say why they employ the word 'Theatres' in the plural in their name, but onomastics indicates at once their liking for the French language, a feeling confirmed by numerous song titles in this language. On their album *Bloody Lunatic Asylum*, two titles are in French: *Une Saison en Enfer*<sup>37</sup> and *Les Litanies de Satan* – and it is clear that these are intersemiotic songs (Theatres des Vampires 2001). We notice how close the two poets they chose are. Baudelaire's poetry has inspired Arthur Rimbaud, while both are often categorized as belonging to Symbolism, precursors to Modernism, and *poètes maudits*. The song *Une Saison en Enfer* is, in fact, a distant form of intersemiosis, as the lyrics are in English and only have thematic content in common with the original text. English poet William Blake is also honored in a song named *Pale Religious Letchery [sic]*, on the same album. The record booklet explicitly mentions "Words By [Words Taken From] William Blake and Charles Baudelaire", and "Tracks 3 & 11 are homages to Rimbaud & Baudelaire." Again, the album attests to a dialogical variety of voices and languages.

Moreover, the band includes three vocalists, a man and two women, who provide the singing in turn or together. *Une Saison en Enfer* is a heavy song, mostly involving a male and husky voice. In contrast, Baudelaire's poem is carefully read aloud and in turn by singers Sonya Scarlet and Justine Consuelo, with their pronounced Italian accent – another pleasant 'deterritorialization' of Baudelaire's verses. Some words are also whispered as an echo, giving a soft and mysterious spirit to the whole. Once again, the usual, violent metal music characteristics are softened, if not chased away, to welcome the French poem. Even an uncompromising band like Gorgoroth feels duty-bound to treat Baudelaire obligingly. This is how Abbott and Ardrey analyze this phenomenon in a Baudelaire Song Project article:

The performance aspects also inflect Gorgoroth's interpretation of the text; like Theatres des Vampires, they capitalize on the incantatory nature of *Litanies de Satan* by reciting the poem in a way which exploits the throaty quality of the death growl but which also retains a level of clarity in a nod to the aesthetic of *Sprechgesang*, suggesting an interpretation of the text as a marriage of poetry and black metal aesthetic. (Abbott and Ardrey 2017)

<sup>37</sup> *A Season in Hell* is an 1873 extended poem in prose by French Symbolist poet Arthur Rimbaud.

The 'double deterritorialization' remains because of the surrounding sounds, of the dark artworks, and of the genre itself to which the musicians belong – and we notice, nevertheless, that the intersemiotic songs often appear in final position on the albums (Gravity, Theatres des Vampires) or as an 'Interlude' (Radium Valley), as if they were a transition out of the metal work.

Similarly, the most interesting contribution of Theatres des Vampires' version of *Les Litanies de Satan* is the accompanying music played on the piano, Beethoven's *Moonlight Sonata* (first movement from Piano Sonata No.14, Op.27 No.2). Everything happens as if classical literature needed to be accompanied by classical music, even if the choice of Beethoven's *Moonlight Sonata* leads us to the most 'popular' classics, those of the classical mainstream.

Beethoven is probably the composer most frequently cited by metal musicians when asked about their musical influences. For example, Robert Walser points out the presence of Beethoven among Swedish neoclassical metal guitarist Yngwie Malmsteen's acknowledgments (Walser 1993: 57), while the singer of Greek symphonic death metal band Septicflesh told us during an interview:

One thing in common connects the worlds of these different music styles: this is their atmosphere. [...] You could listen to Mozart, Beethoven, Bach, even the work of Stravinsky, Boulez, and all these composers, and you could dream. [...] So, I think that this combination of classical music and metal is like thinking about a piano and unlocking some hidden treasures of nature. Things that are well hidden. (Spiros 'Seth' Antoniou 2018)

This statement clearly shows the importance accorded to classical influences by this metal musician, and moreover, the powerful meaning that he detects in the association between his 'popular' subgenre and the great classical works – including Beethoven's. Walser points out "the violence in Beethoven's *Eroica*, for example, or the glorification of drugs, violence, and Satanism in the *Symphonie fantastique* [Berlioz]" comparing them to the controversial, or even censored heavy metal songs, especially in the eighties (Walser 1993: 141).

## 5. Heavy metal Baudelaire: translatability through 'correspondences'

The association of Baudelaire and Beethoven is not surprising, nor is their powerful presence in metal intersemiosis. Heidegger referred to Beethoven as "the first great Romantic" (Heidegger 1991: aph. 842), whereas Baudelaire is often presented as the last French Romantic. The poet himself recognizes the filiation:

Beethoven began to stir up the worlds of incurable melancholia and despair, gathered as clouds in the inside sky of mankind. Maturin in novels, Byron in poetry, Poe in both poetry and analytic novels [...] remarkably expressed the blasphemous part of passion; they projected splendid, dazzling rays towards the latent Lucifer set up in every human heart. (Baudelaire 1885[1868])<sup>38</sup>

It is striking how applicable this definition is to metal music as well. Walser presents the metal musician as 'an updated self-torturing Romantic artist' (1993: 100) while the intersemiotic choices in metal show a predilection for Romantic works (Blake, Coleridge, Poe, among others). Metal's aesthetics and stances 'correspond' particularly well with Baudelaire's 'frantic' poetry.

We have already mentioned the singular place occupied by metal in the field of popular music: a marginal, counter-cultural place. This attitude borders on a form of elitism more often than not. It is undoubtedly the case for black metal, as Camille Béra (2018) explains: "Black metal developed its ethics, creating a further flood of new codes and references. This codification, sometimes pushed to the limits by some individuals, favored the adoption of an 'elitism' which aims to reinforce this separation."<sup>39</sup> This becomes all the more interesting as we note the predominance of black metal within Baudelairean metal intersemiosis.

This intentional exclusion is not dissimilar to some of the positions in which Baudelaire found himself, especially after the 1857 trial which condemned six of his poems from *Fleurs du Mal*. We think about his unforgiving comparison of a dog with the common readership "whom one shall never present delicate perfumes which exasperate him, but carefully selected filth" in *The dog and the bottle of perfume*, a prose poem taken from *Le Spleen de Paris* (Baudelaire 2000).<sup>40</sup>

<sup>38</sup> Original quotation: 'Beethoven a commencé à remuer les mondes de mélancolie et de désespoir incurable amassés comme des nuages dans le ciel intérieur de l'homme. Maturin dans le roman, Byron dans la poésie, Poe dans la poésie et dans le roman analytique, [...] ont admirablement exprimé la partie blasphématoire de la passion ; ils ont projeté des rayons splendides, éblouissants, sur le Lucifer latent qui est installé dans tout cœur humain.' (Baudelaire 1885: 365-375) My translation in the text.

<sup>39</sup> Original quotation: '[...] le Black metal a développé une éthique qui lui est propre, engendrant un flot supplémentaire de codes et de références inédites. Cette codification, parfois poussée à l'extrême par certains individus, a favorisé l'adoption d'un « élitisme, » visant à renforcer cette séparation.' (Béra 2018: 211) My translation in the text.

<sup>40</sup> Original quotation: "[...] vous ressemblez au public à qui il ne faut jamais présenter des parfums délicats qui l'exaspèrent,

This elitism of Baudelaire and metal artists often comes with a tendency to misanthropy, which is mistrust towards humankind. Margaret Miner, about the prose poem *At 1 a.m.*, underlines how the Baudelairean narrator “claims to have invested painfully large amounts of fawning and flattery in exchange for very small quantities of cooperation and opportunity” and “has lost ground during all of the day’s encounters” (Miner 1998: 42). In a poem added in the 1861 edition, Baudelaire compares the poet with *The Albatross*, “this prince of cloud and sky [...] when exiled to the earth, the butt of hoots and jeers”.<sup>41</sup> The same feeling is shared by many metal artists, especially in the extreme subgenres (such as black and death metal). In our corpus, we find a French death metal band called Misanthrope, after Molière’s play,<sup>42</sup> which exhibits many levels of Baudelairean intersemiosis. One of their albums is named *Recueil d’Ecueils: les épaves et autres oeuvres interdites* (Collection of Pitfalls: the scraps and other forbidden works) (Misanthrope 2000), explicitly referring to Baudelaire’s *Scraps*, mentioned earlier. Once again, a metal band refers to the ‘marginal’ poems of Baudelaire’s famous work. As happened with Therion’s *Les Fleurs du Mal* and *Les Épaves*, the intersemiotic process is quite loose, being a matter of reference or homage, except for yet another version of *Les Litanies de Satan* (which does not belong to the ‘scraps’).

More original is the other intersemiotic album by Misanthrope, whose artwork includes a stylized version of Baudelaire’s portrait by Étienne Carjat (another paraphonographic hint of the work’s intersemiotic nature): *IrremeDIABLE* (Misanthrope 2008) (a pun on the word ‘irremediable’ containing *diable*, which means ‘devil’). Besides a faithful, exceptionally intelligible version of the poem LXXXIV *L’Irrémédiable* closing – once again – the album, several songs refer to Baudelaire’s life and work. One title is named 1857 after the year of *Les Fleurs du Mal*’s release and trial; another song is entitled *Le Dandy de Bohême* (The Bohemian Dandy), and another, *Le Maudit et son Spleen* (The Damned and his Spleen), two nicknames which would perfectly suit Charles Baudelaire himself. In the latter, the notion of ‘damned artist’ experienced by both the French poet and the metal musician (the third and first-person singular is employed in turn) is developed, or even caricatured – the border between seriousness and irony is always difficult to define with such a band. In Misanthrope’s song, “the Baudelairean procrastination” is “affected by the cruel human nature”,<sup>43</sup> some lyrics are sung with a saturated voice, accompanied by a quick, strange and dissonant music. Along with the allusions to several poems – “Go, indolent albatross / Satan looking for the rhyme”<sup>44</sup> –

<sup>41</sup> Original quotation: ‘Le Poète est semblable au Prince des nuées [...] / Exilé sur le sol au milieu des huées’ (Baudelaire 2019: 210)

<sup>42</sup> We also draw attention to the name chosen by Stéphane ‘Neige’ Paut, one of Amesoeurs’ musicians, for his side-project: Alcest – or the very name of Molière’s *Misanthrope*.

<sup>43</sup> Original quotation: ‘La procrastination baudelairienne / Affligée par la cruelle nature de l’homme’ (Misanthrope 2008: ‘Le Maudit et son Spleen’) My translation in the text.

<sup>44</sup> Original quotation: ‘Va, albatros indolent / Satan à la recherche de la rime’ (Misanthrope 2008: ‘Le Maudit et son Spleen’) My translation in the text.



a form of intersemiosis named “impli-citation” by Tiphaine Samoyault (2001: 44), which absorbs the intertext without pointing it out – Misanthrope is evidently inspired by Baudelaire’s figure and reveals the ‘correspondence’ experienced with him.

Finally, we notice how Baudelairean seem to be the metal bands which we have evoked, especially those belonging to the extreme subgenres of metal: black metal, death metal, deathcore. Their music is violent, difficult to hear, and to understand, marked by a great deal of evil and scandal – is this not precisely that for which his contemporaries reproached Baudelaire? The critic Armand de Pontmartin experienced nothing less than a “feeling of disgust stronger than everything” towards “this literature of mass graves, of slaughterhouses and sin places.” (Guyaux 2007)<sup>45</sup> We cannot help making a connection between the trial initiated against *Les Fleurs du Mal* for “contempt of public morality,” and the actions taken in the eighties by the Parental Music Research Center, headed by the U.S. Senator’s wife Tipper Gore and leaning on a *Heavy metal User’s Guide* written by Joe Stuessy, which emphasized that: “Most of the successful heavy metal projects deal with one or more of the following themes: extreme rebellion, extreme violence, substance abuse, sexual promiscuity / perversion (including homosexuality, bisexuality, sadomasochism, necrophilia, etc.), Satanism.” (Stuessy 1985: 6) The parallels are stunning.

Borrowing from Etienne Souriau’s theory of *The Correspondence of Arts* (1969), it seems to us that to the “corrupt, and rich, triumphant” perfumes of Baudelaire’s work corresponds the extraordinary and resounding complexity of Gravity’s drums in *La Dernière empreinte* (2017), “That sing the ecstasy of the soul and senses.” (*Correspondences*)<sup>46</sup> Also, the long, plaintive cries of a black metal vocalist like Amesoeurs’ aptly translate the French poet’s *Spleen*, when “All at once the bells leap with rage / And hurl a frightful roar at heaven, / Even as wandering spirits with no country / Burst into a stubborn, whimpering cry.”<sup>47</sup>

<sup>45</sup> Original quotation: “[...] un sentiment de dégoût plus fort que tout le reste [...] cette littérature de charnier, d’abattoir et de mauvais lieu” (Guyaux 2007: 174) My translation in the text.

<sup>46</sup> Original quotation: ‘Et d’autres, corrompus, riches et triomphants [...] / Qui chantent les transports de l’esprit et des sens.’ in ‘Correspondances’ (Baudelaire 2019: 20)

<sup>47</sup> Original quotation: “Des cloches tout à coup sautent avec furie / Et lancent vers le ciel un affreux hurlement, / Ainsi que des esprits errants et sans patrie / Qui se mettent à geindre opiniâtrement.” in ‘Spleen: Quand le ciel bas et lourd...’ (Baudelaire 2019: 119)

## 6. Conclusion

We have tried to show that the alchemical process applied to Baudelaire's poetry by metal artists' intersemiotic songs is an updating rather than a depreciation: "the literature of the past must not be commemorated or rendered harmless: quite the reverse, its subversive potential must be reactivated", as wished by Stéphane Malfettes (2000).<sup>48</sup>

Indeed, in the tortured, controversial songs of extreme metal bands, Baudelaire's outrageous – and brilliant – gesture recovers its initial meaning. We have shown that however translated and 'deterritorialized' they had been, surrounded by the strangeness and the violence of an album, of voices, of a musical subgenre, Baudelaire's poems always came out sublimated by the process.

In their song named *1857*, Misanthrope (2008) explicitly incite their listeners to "turn together some pages / Of *Les Fleurs du Mal* / An enigmatic work".<sup>49</sup> It is undoubtedly an invitation to discover or re-read Baudelaire's poetry. For part of his/her public, the metal artist becomes a transmitter of classics. At the same time, he/she provides to those who already know them an experience that Italo Calvino (1993) describes in these terms: "Each new reading of a classic is a discovery, as the first reading."

Baudelaire's translatability into heavy metal rests on a level of alchemy other than that the spleenful king's sage "who makes his gold [and] was never able / To extract from him the tainted element" (*Spleen*: "I am like the king...").<sup>50</sup> This time, the essence of *Spleen* is extracted by the cathartic action of saturated, distorted, and powerful music.

<sup>48</sup> Original quotation: "La littérature du passé ne doit pas être commémorée, rendue inoffensive : il s'agit au contraire de ré-activer son potentiel subversif." (Malfettes 2000: 34) My translation in the text.

<sup>49</sup> Original quotation: 'Tournons ensemble quelques pages / Des *Fleurs du Mal* / Œuvre énigmatique' (Misanthrope 2008: 1857) My translation in the text.

<sup>50</sup> Original quotation: 'Le savant qui lui fait de l'or n'a jamais pu / De son être extirper l'élément corrompu' (*Spleen*: Je suis comme le roi...) (Baudelaire 2019: 118)

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