

# Baudelaire's Media Aesthetics

The Gaze of the Flâneur and  
19th-Century Media

*Marit Grøtta*

Bloomsbury Academic  
An imprint of Bloomsbury Publishing Inc

B L O O M S B U R Y  
NEW YORK • LONDON • OXFORD • NEW DELHI • SYDNEY

# CONTENTS

*Acknowledgments* vii

*List of illustrations* viii

## Introduction 1

The gaze of the flâneur and nineteenth-century media 3

Paris: Capital of modernity 3

A lyric poet in the age of new media 6

Art and technology: Theories of mediation 10

Media technology and ideology criticism 10

Media technology and aesthetics: Theories of mediation 12

Dispositives: Frames of perception 15

Play in the era of technological reproducibility 17

Baudelaire's media aesthetics 19

## 1 Newspapers 23

A duel: Journalism versus poetry 24

Newspaper aesthetics 26

Interaction: The circulation between literature and journalism 27

A dedicated newspaper reader 30

A letter to the editor 33

Making sense of modern life: Between anecdote and allegory 38

Poetry goes incognito 41

## 2 Photographs 47

The cult of images 48

Framed vision: Windows and photography 54

Reading/developing images 59

Visual desire: Portrait photography and fetishism 62

Traffic in souls: Arresting/escaping identity 66

Making images move 69

- 3 Precinematic devices 73
- Opening a new field of vision 74
  - Optical toys as initiation into art 80
  - The modern experience: Flickering life and movement 86
  - How to capture movement? 91
  - Kaleidoscopic vision 96
  - Virtual images: The visual attraction of modern life 100
- 4 Corporeality 103
- The bodily apparatus: Perception and technology 104
  - The impulsion to act 107
  - Violence: Bodies in motion 109
  - Enjoying the crowd is an art 116
  - Multitude: Crowds, commonplaces, and mass communication 119
- 5 Toys 123
- Interfaces: Toys, dispositives, and transitional objects 124
  - The toy fairy: A childhood memory 126
  - How toys come alive 130
  - The uncertain status of objects 135
  - Play and profanation 138
- 6 Media imagery and modernity 143
- Baudelaire's media aesthetics recapitulated 146
  - Media imagery in theories of modernity 148
    - Marx: The phantasmagoria of commodities 150
    - Benjamin: Paris as a phantasmagoria 152
    - Freud: The psyche as a photographic apparatus 156
    - Benjamin: Time as a photographer 159
    - Benjamin: The stereoscope and the dialectical image 161
    - Benjamin: The kaleidoscope must be smashed 163
  - Media aesthetics and modernity 165
- Notes* 169
- Bibliography* 193
- Index* 201