Lucia White, *The Intellectual versus the City: From Thomas Jefferson to Frank Lloyd Wright*, Cambridge, Mass., 1962.

5 Renato Poggioli, *The Theory of the Avant-Garde*, Cambridge, Mass., 1968, pp. 30–40.

6 Roger Shattuck, *The Banquet Years: The Arts in France 1885–1918*, London, 1959.

7 Leon Trotsky, *Literature and Revolution*, translated by Rose Strunsky, London, 1925, p. 126, reprinted 1960, Ann Arbor, Michigan.

8 On the problem of 'legibility', and the loss of a 'visual hierarchy' in modern conurbations, see Kevin Lynch, *The Image of the City*, Cambridge, Mass., 1974.

9 Quoted in Helen Williams, *T. S. Eliot: The Waste Land*, London, 1973, p. 15.

10 For an analysis of Delaunay's Eiffel Tower paintings see Sherry A. Buckberrough, *Robert Delaunay: The Discovery of Simultaneity*, Ann Arbor, 1982, pp. 47–77.

11 For a more detailed account of the Utopian strain in modern architecture, see Reyner Banham, *Theory and Design in the First Machine Age*, London, 1960; Robert Hughes, *The Shock of the New*, London, 1980, Chapter 4; Robert Fishman, *Urban Utopias of the Twentieth Century*, Cambridge, Mass., 1982.

12 Further guidance about the literature and art of the city can be found in *Modernism 1890–1930*, ed. Malcolm Bradbury and James McFarlane, Harmondsworth, 1976; *Metropolis 1890–1940*, ed. Anthony Sutcliffe, London, 1984; *Visions of the Modern City*, ed. William Sharpe and Leonard Wallock, New York, 1984; Diana Festa-McCormick, *The City as Catalyst: A Study of Ten Novels*, Fairleigh Dickinson, 1983; Monroe K. Spears, *Dionysus and the City: Modernism in Twentieth-Century Poetry*, New York, 1970; William B. Thesing, *The London Muse: Victorian Poetic Responses to the City*, Athens, Georgia, 1982; Burton Pike, *The Image of the City in Modern Literature*, Princeton, 1981.

13 See Samuel Hynes, *The Auden Generation: Literature and Politics in England in the 1930s*, London, 1976.

14 Ortega y Gasset, *The Dehumanization of Art and Other Writings*, New York, 1956.

15 See J. P. Stern, ' "Reality" in early twentieth-century German literature', in *Philosophy and Literature*, ed. A. Phillips Griffiths, Cambridge, 1984, pp. 41–57.

The metropolis and the emergence of Modernism

Modernism as a critical concept

It is now clear that there are decisive links between the practices and ideas of the avant-garde movements of the twentieth century and the specific conditions and relationships of the twentieth-century metropolis. The evidence has been there all along, and is indeed in many cases obvious. Yet until recently it has been difficult to disengage this specific historical and cultural relationship from a less specific but widely celebrated (and execrated) sense of 'the modern'.

In the late twentieth century it has become increasingly necessary to notice how relatively far back the most important period of 'modern art' now appears to be. The conditions and relationships of the early twentieth-century metropolis have in many respects both intensified and been widely extended. In the simplest sense, great metropolitan aggregations, continuing the development of cities into vast conurbations, are still historically increasing (at an even more explosive rate in the Third World). In the old industrial countries, a new kind of division between the crowded and often derelict 'inner city' and the expanding suburbs and commuter developments has been marked. Moreover, within the older kinds of metropolis, and for many of the same reasons, various kinds of avant-garde movement still persist and even flourish. Yet at a deeper level the cultural conditions of the metropolis have decisively changed.

The most influential technologies and institutions of art, though they are still centred in this or that metropolis, extend and indeed are directed beyond it, to whole diverse cultural areas, not by slow influence but by immediate transmission. There could hardly be a greater cultural contrast than that between the technologies and institutions of what is still mainly called 'modern art' – writing, painting, sculpture, drama, in minority

presses and magazines, small galleries and exhibitions, city-centre theatres – and the effective output of the late twentieth-century metropolis, in film, television, radio and recorded music. Conservative analysts still reserve the categories 'art' or 'the arts' to the earlier technologies and institutions, with continued attachment to the metropolis as the centre in which an enclave can be found for them or in which they can, often as a 'national' achievement, be displayed. But this is hardly compatible with a continued intellectual emphasis on their 'modernity', when the actual modern media are of so different a kind. Secondly, the metropolis has taken on a much wider meaning, in the extension of an organised global market in the new cultural technologies. It is not every vast urban aggregation, or even great capital city, which has this cultural metropolitan character. The effective metropolis – as is shown in the borrowing of the word to indicate relations between nations, in the neo-colonial world – is now the modern transmitting metropolis of the technically advanced and dominant economies.

Thus the retention of such categories as 'modern' and 'Modernism' to describe aspects of the art and thought of an undifferentiated twentieth-century world is now at best anachronistic, at worst archaic. What accounts for the persistence is a matter for complex analysis, but three elements can be emphasised. First, there is a factual persistence, in the old technologies and forms but with selected extensions to some of the new, of the specific relations between minority arts and metropolitan privileges and opportunities. Secondly, there is a persistent intellectual hegemony of the metropolis, in its command of the most serious publishing houses, newspapers and magazines, and intellectual institutions, formal and especially informal. Ironically, in a majority of cases, these formations are in some important respects residual: the intellectual and artistic forms in which they have their main roots are for social reasons – especially in their supporting formulations of 'minority' and 'mass', 'quality' and 'popular' – of that older, early twentieth-century period, which for them is the perennially 'modern'. Thirdly and most fundamentally, the central product of that earlier period, for reasons which must be explored, was a new set of 'universals', aesthetic, intellectual and psychological, which can be sharply contrasted with the older 'universals' of specific cultures, periods and faiths, but which in just that quality resist all further specificities, of historical change or of cultural and social diversity: in the conviction of what is beyond question and for all effective time the 'modern absolute', the defined universality of a human condition which is effectively permanent.

There are several possible ways out of this intellectual deadlock, which now has so much power over a whole range of philosophical, aesthetic and political thinking. The most effective involve contemporary analysis in a

still rapidly changing world. But it is also useful, when faced by this curious condition of cultural stasis – curious because it is a stasis which is continually defined in dynamic and experientially precarious terms – to identify some of the processes of its formation: seeing a present beyond 'the modern' by seeing how, in the past, that specifically absolute 'modern' was formed. For this identification, the facts of the development of the city into the metropolis are basic. We can see how certain themes in art and thought developed as specific responses to the new and expanding kinds of nineteenth-century city and then, as the central point of analysis, see how these went through a variety of actual artistic transformations, supported by newly offered (and competitive) aesthetic universals, in certain metropolitan conditions of the early twentieth century: the moment of 'modern art'.

Nineteenth-century antecedents to the theme of urban alienation

It is important to emphasise how relatively old some of these apparently modern themes are. For that is the inherent history of themes at first contained within 'pre-modern' forms of art which then in certain conditions led to actual and radical changes of form. It is the largely hidden history of the conditions of these profound internal changes which we have to explore, often against the clamour of the 'universals' themselves.

For convenience I will take examples of the themes from English literature, which is particularly rich in them. Britain went through the first stages of industrial and metropolitan development very early, and almost at once certain persistent themes were arrived at. Thus the effect of the modern city as a crowd of strangers was identified, in a way that was to last, by Wordsworth:

> O Friend! one feeling was there which belonged
> To this great city, by exclusive right;
> How often, in the overflowing streets,
> Have I gone forward with the crowd and said
> Unto myself, 'The face of every one
> That passes by me is a mystery!'
>
> Thus have I looked, nor ceased to look, oppressed
> By thoughts of what and whither, when and how,
> Until the shapes before my eyes became
> A second-sight procession, such as glides
> Over still mountains, or appears in dreams.
> And all the ballast of familiar life,

> The present, and the past; hope, fear; all stays,
> All laws of acting, thinking, speaking man
> Went from me, neither knowing me, nor known.[1]

What is evident here is the rapid transition from the mundane fact that the people in the crowded street are unknown to the observer – though we now forget what a novel experience that must in any case have been to people used to customary small settlements – to the now characteristic interpretation of strangeness as 'mystery'. Ordinary modes of perceiving others are seen as overborne by the collapse of normal relationships and their laws: a loss of 'the ballast of familiar life'. Other people are then seen as if in 'second sight' or, crucially, as in dreams: a major point of reference for many subsequent modern artistic techniques.

Closely related to this first theme of the crowd of strangers is a second major theme, of an individual lonely and isolated within the crowd. We can note some continuity in each theme from more general Romantic motifs: the general apprehension of mystery and of extreme and precarious forms of consciousness; the intensity of a paradoxical self-realisation in isolation. But what has happened, in each case, is that an apparently objective milieu, for each of these conditions, has been identified in the newly expanding and overcrowded modern city. There are a hundred cases, from James Thomson to George Gissing and beyond, of the relatively simple transition from earlier forms of isolation and alienation to their specific location in the city. Thomson's poem, 'The Doom of a City' (1857) addresses the theme explicitly, as 'Solitude in the midst of a great City':

> The cords of sympathy which should have bound me
> In sweet communication with earth's brotherhood
> I drew in tight and tighter still around me,
> Strangling my lost existence for a mood.[2]

Again, in the better-known 'City of Dreadful Night' (1870), a direct relationship is proposed between the city and a form of agonised consciousness:

> The City is of Night, but not of Sleep;
> There sweet sleep is not for the weary brain;
> The pitiless hours like years and ages creep,
> A night seems termless hell. This dreadful strain
> Of thought and consciousness which never ceases,
> Or which some moment's stupor but increases,
> This, worse than woe, makes wretches there insane.[3]

There is direct influence from Thomson in Eliot's early city poems. But more generally important is the extension of the association between isolation and the city to alienation in its most subjective sense: a range from

dream or nightmare (the formal vector of 'Doom of a City'), through the distortions of opium or alcohol, to actual insanity. These states are being given a persuasive and ultimately conventional social location.

On the other hand, alienation in the city could be given a social rather than a psychological emphasis. This is evident in Elizabeth Gaskell's interpretation of the streets of Manchester in *Mary Barton*, in much of Dickens, especially in *Dombey and Son*, and (though here with more emphasis on the isolated and crushed observer) in Gissing's *Demos* and *The Nether World*. It is an emphasis drawn out and formally argued by Engels:

> . . . They crowd by one another as though they had nothing in common, nothing to do with one another. . . . The brutal indifference, the unfeeling isolation of each in his private interest becomes the more repellent and offensive, the more these individuals are crowded together, within a limited space. And, however much one may be aware that this isolation of the individual, this narrow self-seeking is the fundamental principle of our society everywhere, it is nowhere so shamelessly barefaced, so self-conscious as just here in the crowding of the great city. The dissolution of mankind into monads . . . is here carried out to its utmost extremes.[4]

These alternative emphases of alienation, primarily subjective or social, are often fused or confused within the general development of the theme. In a way their double location within the modern city has helped to override what is otherwise a sharp difference of emphasis. Yet both the alternatives and their fusion or confusion point ahead to observable tendencies in twentieth-century avant-garde art, with its at times fused, at times dividing, orientations towards extreme subjectivity (including subjectivity as redemption or survival) and social or social/cultural revolution.

There is also a third theme, offering a very different interpretation of the strangeness and crowding and thus the 'impenetrability' of the city. Already in 1751 Fielding had observed:

> Whoever considers the Cities of London and Westminster, with the late vast increases of their suburbs, the great irregularity of their buildings, the immense numbers of lanes, alleys, courts and bye-places, must think that had they been intended for the very purpose of concealment they could not have been better contrived.[5]

This was a direct concern with the facts of urban crime, and the emphasis persisted. The 'dark London' of the late nineteenth-century, and particularly the East End, were often seen as warrens of crime, and one important literary response to this was the new figure of the urban detective. In Conan Doyle's *Sherlock Holmes* stories there is a recurrent image of the penetration by an isolated rational intelligence of a dark area of crime which is to be found in the otherwise (for specific physical reasons, as in the London

fogs, but also for social reasons, in that teeming, mazelike, often alien area) impenetrable city. This figure has persisted in the urban 'private eye' (as it happens, an exact idiom for the basic position in consciousness) in cities without the fogs.

On the other hand, the idea of 'darkest London' could be given a social emphasis. It is already significant that the use of statistics to understand an otherwise too complex and too numerous society had been pioneered in Manchester from the 1830s. Booth in the 1880s applied statistical survey techniques to London's East End. There is some relation between these forms of exploration and the generalising panoramic perspectives of some twentieth-century novels (Dos Passos, Tressell). There were naturalistic accounts from within the urban environment, again with an emphasis on crime, in several novels of the 1890s, for example, Morrison's *Tales of Mean Streets* (1894). But in general it was as late as the 1930s, and then in majority in realist modes, before any of the actual inhabitants of these dark areas wrote their own perspectives, which included the poverty and the squalor but also, in sharp contradiction to the earlier accounts, the neighbourliness and community which were actual working-class responses.

A fourth general theme can, however, be connected with this explicit late response. Wordsworth, interestingly, saw not only the alienated city but new possibilities of unity:

> among the multitudes
> Of that huge city, oftentimes was seen
> Affectingly set forth, more than elsewhere
> Is possible, the unity of men.[6]

What could be seen, as often in Dickens, as a deadening uniformity, could be seen also, as again in Dickens and indeed, crucially, in Engels, as the site of new kinds of human solidarity. The ambiguity had been there from the beginning, in the interpretation of the urban crowd as 'mass' or 'masses', a significant change from the earlier 'mob'. The masses could indeed be seen, as in one of Wordsworth's emphases, as:

> slaves unrespited of low pursuits,
> Living amid the same perpetual flow
> Of trivial objects, melted and reduced
> To one identity . . .[7]

But 'mass' and 'masses' were also to become the heroic, organising words of working-class and revolutionary solidarity. The factual development of new kinds of radical organisation within both capital and industrial cities sustained this positive urban emphasis.

A fifth theme goes beyond this, but in the same positive direction.

Dickens's London can be dark, and his Coketown darker. But although, as also later in H. G. Wells, there is a conventional theme of escape to a more peaceful and innocent rural spot, there is a specific and unmistakable emphasis of the vitality, the variety, the liberating diversity and mobility of the city. As the physical conditions of the cities were improved, this sense came through more and more strongly. The idea of the pre-Industrial and pre-metropolitan city as a place of light and learning, as well as of power and magnificence, was resumed with a special emphasis on physical light: the new illuminations of the city. This is evident in very simple form in Le Gallienne in the 1890s:

> London, London, our delight,
> Great flower that opens but at night,
> Great city of the midnight sun,
> Whose day begins when day is done.
>
> Lamp after lamp against the sky
> Opens a sudden beaming eye,
> Leaping a light on either hand
> The iron lilies of the Strand.[8]

The metropolis as a melting-pot: new attitudes to the medium of art

It is not only the continuity, it is also the diversity of these themes, composing as they do so much of the repertory of modern art, which should now be emphasised. Although Modernism can be clearly identified as a distinctive movement, in its deliberate distance from and challenge to more traditional forms of art and thought, it is also strongly characterised by its internal diversity of methods and emphases: a restless and often directly competitive sequence of innovations and experiments, always more immediately recognised by what they are breaking from than by what, in any simple way, they are breaking towards. Even the range of basic cultural positions, within Modernism, stretches from an eager embrace of modernity, either in its new technical and mechanical forms or in the equally significant attachments to ideas of social and political revolution, to conscious options for past or exotic cultures, as sources or at least as fragments *against* the modern world. This range of responses, from the Futurist affirmation of the city to Eliot's pessimistic recoil, is explored in subsequent chapters of this book.

Many elements of this diversity have to be related to the specific cultures and situations within which different kinds of work and position were to be developed, though within the simpler ideology of modernism this is often

resisted: the innovations being directly related only to themselves (as the related critical procedures of formalism and structuralism came to insist). But the diversity of position and method has another kind of significance. The themes, in their variety, including as we have seen diametrically opposite as well as diverse attitudes to the city and its modernity, had formerly been included within relatively traditional forms of art. What then stands out as new, and is in this defining sense 'modern', is the series (including the competitive sequence) of breaks in form. Yet if we say only this we are carried back inside the ideology, ignoring the continuity of themes from the nineteenth century and isolating the breaks of form, or worse, as often in subsequent pseudo-histories, relating the formal breaks to the themes as if both were comparably innovative. For it is not the general themes of response to the city and its modernity which compose anything that can be properly called Modernism. It is rather the new and specific location of the artists and intellectuals of this movement within the changing cultural milieu of the metropolis.

For a number of social and historical reasons the metropolis of the second half of the nineteenth century and of the first half of the twentieth century moved into a quite new cultural dimension. It was now much more than the very large city, or even the capital city of an important nation. It was the place where new social and economic and cultural relations, beyond both city and nation in their older senses, were beginning to be formed: a distinct historical phase which was in fact to be extended, in the second half of the twentieth century, at least potentially, to the whole world.

In the earliest phases this development had much to do with imperialism: with the magnetic concentration of wealth and power in imperial capitals and the simultaneous cosmopolitan access to a wide variety of subordinate cultures. But it was always more than the orthodox colonial system. Within Europe itself there was a very marked unevenness of development, both within particular countries, where the distances between capitals and provinces widened, socially and culturally, in the uneven developments of industry and agriculture, and of a monetary economy and simple subsistence or market forms. Even more crucial differences emerged between individual countries, which came to compose a new kind of hierarchy, not simply, as in the old terms, of military power, but in terms of development and thence of perceived enlightenment and modernity.

Moreover, both within many capital cities, and especially within the major metropolises, there was at once a complexity and a sophistication of social relations, supplemented in the most important cases – Paris, above all – by exceptional liberties of expression. This complex and open milieu

contrasted very sharply with the persistence of traditional social, cultural and intellectual forms in the provinces and in the less developed countries. Again, in what was not only the complexity but the miscellaneity of the metropolis, so different in these respects from traditional cultures and societies beyond it, the whole range of cultural activity could be accommodated.

The metropolis housed the great traditional academies and museums and their orthodoxies; their very proximity and powers of control were both a standard and a challenge. But also, within the new kind of open, complex and mobile society, small groups in any form of divergence or dissent could find some kind of foothold, in ways that would not have been possible if the artists and thinkers composing them had been scattered in more traditional, closed societies. Moreover, within both the miscellaneity of the metropolis – which in the course of capitalist and imperialist development had characteristically attracted a very mixed population, from a variety of social and cultural origins – and its concentration of wealth and thus opportunities of patronage, such groups could hope to attract, indeed to form, new kinds of audience. In the early stages the foothold was usually precarious. There is a radical contrast between these often struggling (and quarrelling and competitive) groups, who between them made what is now generally referred to as 'modern art', and the funded and trading institutions, academic and commercial, which were eventually to generalise and deal in them. The continuity is one of underlying ideology, but there is still a radical difference between the two generations: the struggling innovators and the modernist establishment which consolidated their achievement.

Thus the key cultural factor of the modernist shift is the character of the metropolis: in these general conditions but then, even more decisively, in its direct effects on form. The most important general element of the innovations in form is the fact of immigration to the metropolis, and it cannot too often be emphasised how many of the major innovators were, in this precise sense, immigrants. At the level of theme, this underlies, in an obvious way, the elements of strangeness and distance, indeed of alienation, which so regularly form part of the repertory. But the decisive aesthetic effect is at a deeper level. Liberated or breaking from their national or provincial cultures, placed in quite new relations to those other native languages or native visual traditions, encountering meanwhile a novel and dynamic common environment from which many of the older forms were obviously distant, the artists and writers and thinkers of this phase found the only community available to them: a community of the medium; of their own practices.

Thus language was perceived quite differently. It was no longer, in the old sense, customary and naturalised, but in many ways arbitrary and conventional. To the immigrants especially, with their new second common language, language was more evident as a medium – a medium that could be shaped and reshaped – than as a social custom. Even within a native language, the new relationships of the metropolis, and the inescapable new uses in newspapers and advertising attuned to it, forced certain productive kinds of strangeness and distance: a new consciousness of conventions and thus of changeable, because now open, conventions. There had long been pressures towards the work of art as artefact and commodity, but these now greatly intensified, and their combined pressures were very complex indeed. The preoccupying visual images and styles of particular cultures did not disappear, any more than the native languages, native tales, the native styles of music and dance, but all were now passed through this crucible of the metropolis, which was in the important cases no mere melting-pot but an intense and visually and linguistically exciting process in its own right, from which remarkable new forms emerged.

At the same time, within the very openness and complexity of the metropolis, there was no formed and settled society to which the new kinds of work could be related. The relationships were to the open and complex and dynamic social process itself, and the only accessible form of this practice was an emphasis on the medium: the medium as that which, in an unprecedented way, defined art. Over a wide and diverse range of practice this emphasis on the medium, and on what can be done in the medium, became dominant. Moreover, alongside the practice, theoretical positions of the same kind, most notably the new linguistics, but also the new aesthetics of significant form and structure, rose to direct, to support, to reinforce and to recommend. So nearly complete was this vast cultural reformation that, at the levels directly concerned – the succeeding metropolitan formations of learning and practice – what had once been defiantly marginal and oppositional became, in its turn, orthodox, although the distance of both from other cultures and peoples remained wide. The key to this persistence is again the social form of the metropolis, for the facts of increasing mobility and social diversity, passing through a continuing dominance of certain metropolitan centres and a related unevenness of all other social and cultural development, led to a major expansion of metropolitan forms of perception, both internal and imposed. Many of the direct forms and media-processes of the minority phase of modern art thus became what could be seen as the common currency of majority communication, especially in films (an art form created, in all important respects, by these perceptions) and in advertising.

It is then necessary to explore, in all its complexity of detail, the many variations in this decisive phase of modern practice and theory. But it is also time to explore it with something of its own sense of strangeness and distance, rather than with the comfortable and now internally accommodated forms of its incorporation and naturalisation. This means, above all, seeing the imperial and capitalist metropolis as a specific historical form, at different stages: Paris, London, Berlin, New York. It involves looking, from time to time, from outside the metropolis: from the deprived hinterlands, where different forces are moving, and from the poor world which has always been peripheral to the metropolitan systems. This need involve no reduction of the importance of the major artistic and literary works which were shaped within metropolitan perceptions. But one level has certainly to be challenged: the metropolitan interpretation of its own processes as universals.

The power of metropolitan development is not to be denied. The excitements and challenges of its intricate processes of liberation and alienation, contact and strangeness, stimulation and standardisation, are still powerfully available. But it should no longer be possible to present these specific and traceable processes as if they were universals, not only in history but as it were above and beyond it. The formulation of the modernist universals is in every case a productive but imperfect and in the end fallacious response to particular conditions of closure, breakdown, failure and frustration. From the necessary negations of these conditions, and from the stimulating strangeness of a new and (as it seemed) unbonded social form, the creative leap to the only available universality – of raw material, of medium, of process – was impressively and influentially made.

At this level as at others – 'modernisation' for example – the supposed universals belong to a phase of history which was both creatively preceded and creatively succeeded. While the universals are still accepted as standard intellectual procedures, the answers come out as impressively as the questions determine. But then it is characteristic of any major cultural phase that it takes its local and traceable positions as universal. This, which Modernism saw so clearly in the past which it was rejecting, remains true for itself. What is succeeding it is still uncertain and precarious, as in its own initial phases. But it can be foreseen that the period in which social strangeness and exposure isolated art as only a medium is due to end, even within the metropolis, leaving from its most active phases the new cultural monuments and their academies which in their turn are being challenged.

Notes to chapter 1

1 *Prelude, VII*; *Wordsworth: Poetical Works*, ed. de Selincourt and Darbishire, London, 1949, p. 261.
2 *Poems and Some Letters of James Thomson*, ed. Ridler, London, 1963, p. 25.
3 *Ibid.*, p. 180.
4 *The Condition of the Working Class in England in 1844*, transl. F. K. Wischnewetzky, London, 1934, p. 24.
5 Henry Fielding, Inquiry into the Cause of the Late Increase of Robbers, (1751) p. 76.
6 Wordsworth, *op.cit.*, p. 286.
7 *Ibid.*, p. 292.
8 *Greater London*, C. Trent, London, 1965, p. 200.

Nineteenth-century Paris: vision and nightmare

Throughout the nineteenth century French society and culture were in a state of crisis. After the great Revolution of 1789 and the Restoration o 1815, there were still three revolutions to come: those of 1830, 1848 an 1871. In a society so divided against itself it was hardly surprising that ever artistic movement had as many detractors as proponents. Romanticism Impressionism, Realism and Symbolism were never simple expressions c any generally agreed ideology or aesthetic – they were battlegrounds. Th divorce between the artist and his public was perhaps most dramaticall expressed in the year 1857 when both *Madame Bovary*[1] and *Les Fleurs d Mal*[2] were prosecuted by the State. In response to these social and politic tensions some writers opted for psychological and aesthetic experimen others for direct protest. But in many works of the century the frontiers a eroded between the political, the moral, and the aesthetic, and the ne aesthetic forms of Baudelaire, Rimbaud and Laforgue express the ne anguish and alienation of French society. Their emotion, whatever th social origins of its revolt, becomes new vision, their revolution becom linguistic.

Paris is at the heart of this phenomenon. It was the capital of Europe most highly centralised government, but also of experimental revolutio Baron Haussmann's monumental Boulevards challenged the secret city dark alleyways and instant barricades. Its culture too was fundamental divided: Gautier and Flaubert fawned on Princess Mathilde in her salo but a counter-culture sprang up around the cafés and cabarets Montmartre. A series of Universal Exhibitions, culminating in the fla boyantly symbolic engineering of the Eiffel Tower, were subtly undermin by the labyrinthine underground narratives of Lautréamont's *Maldoro* and the caustic irony of Laforgue. Walter Benjamin has analysed the paradoxes with particular reference to the closed arcades, or 'passage built off the new boulevards near the Opera. In a later chapter, on Surreal narrative, we shall see that these arcades form the narrative heart of t