

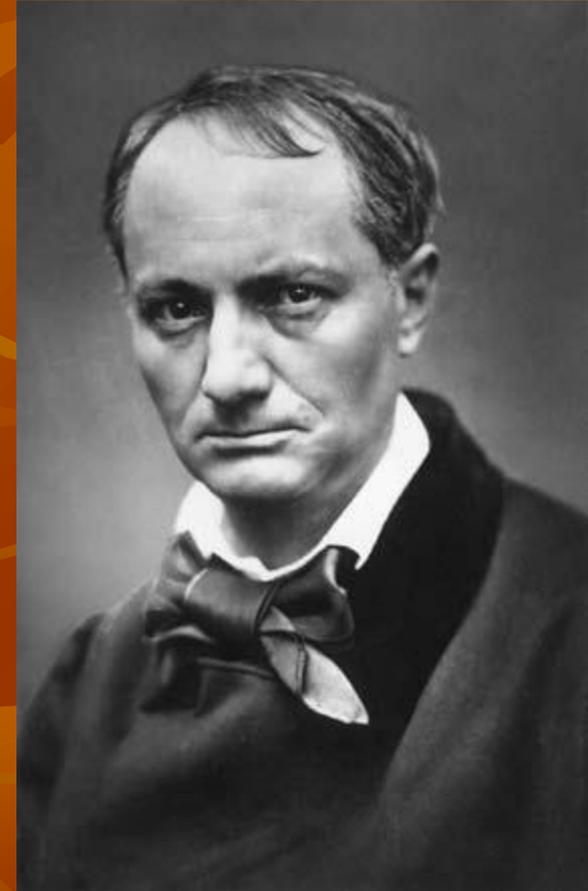
Charles Baudelaire: From Romanticism, to Realism and onward to Symbolism

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Please Silence Cell Phones

Biography (1821-67)

- Father and Step-Father
- Debt and Health Problems
- Jeanne Duval—Black Venus;
Lived off mother; a dandy
- Political Activity
- Art and Literature Critic
- Translated Edgar Allan Poe
- Major work: *Les Fleurs du Mal*,
1857; Indecency prosecution
- Died in his mother's arms



Baudelaire's Aesthetic

- Fear as a poetic theme
- Ugliness as a theme of poetic interest
- Beauty reconceived as bizarre
- From the “Philosophic Art,”: “What is the modern conception of art? It is to create a suggestive magic containing both the object and the subject, the world outside the artist and the artist himself.”
- This theory of art would influence the Symbolist Poets of the 1870s-1890s.

Edouard Manet

- Friendship and advocacy
- After 1845 Salon: "He shall be the true painter who can pull out of everyday life its epic side and make us understand just how great and poetic we are in our neckties and polished boots."
- "La Maitresse de Baudelaire" 1862



Alexandrine Verse

- 12 syllable lines, rhyming
- Number of lines may vary; Alexandrine Sonnet
- 6 Iams with caesura followed by another 6 iams
- First used in Neo-Classical France: Corneille and Racine
- Baudelaire changes position of Caesura

A Une Dame Creole (p. 124))

- In a perfumed land that the sun caresses,
I once knew, canopied by purple trees
And palms where idleness rained on the eyes,
A Creole lady, with unknown charms.

Her skin is ardent and pale; brunette enchantress,
She carries herself in a nobly affected style;
Tall and elegant, she walks like a huntress,
Her eyes are confident, and calm her smile.

If you should go to the true land of glory,
Madame, along the Seine or the green Loire,
O beauty to adorn the old chateaux,

Your eyes would make a thousand sonnets grow,
Sheltered safely in the hearts' dim caves
Of poets grown more servile than your slaves.

A Une Passante

- Amid the deafening traffic of the town,
Tall, slender, in deep mourning, with majesty,
A woman passed, raising, with dignity
In her poised hand, the flounces of her gown;
Graceful, noble, with a statue's form.
And I drank, trembling as a madman thrills,
From her eyes, ashen sky where brooded storm,
The softness that fascinates, the pleasure that kills.

■ A flash...then night! – O lovely fugitive,
I am suddenly reborn from your swift glance;
Shall I never see you til eternity?

Somewhere, far off! Too late! Never, perchance!
Neither knows where the other goes or lives;
We might have loved, and you knew this might be!

- Enjambment from 1st to second stanza
- Parody of Sonnet form and Petrarchan Love
- Love at First Sight transformed to Lust
- A widow flashing in public presented as Beauty
- City as the setting that both creates and denies Love

Don Juan in Hell

- When don Juan descended toward the waves
subterranean,
And when he had paid his fare to Charon,
A somber beggar, eyes proud like Antisthenes,
With arms vengeful and strong, he seized the oars.

Baring their breasts and rending their robes,
The women crowd about beneath the dark sky,
And, like a great crowd of sacrificial victims,
Follow behind him with a long groaning.

Sganarelle, laughing, begged him for his wage;
Don Luis, still angry, with a trembling finger
Pointed to all the dead wandering upon the shores
The bold son who mocked his white head.

Trembling in her mourning, the chaste and weak Elvira,
Whom he recently married, malicious, and who was his lover,
seemed to implore of him a final, perfect smile
Where the sweetness of his first speech shined.

To his right in his armor, a great man of stone
Held himself at the helm and cut the black current;
But the calm hero, leaning upon his rapier,
Stared into the wake, ignoring all of them.

A Martyr (257)

- Sensuous imagery
- Shocking juxtaposition to “from a headless corpse runs a thin flood over the sated pillow, and the linen drinks the red and living blood with the greediness of a meadow.”
- She is not a Martyr for religion but for love
- Itemized description of body parallels the Petrarch love sonnet, which catalogued a woman’s beauty, body part by body part
- Parodying the traditional love poem

Une Charogne (Carrion), p. 71

- He recalls seeing a dead body one summer morning with his lover
- Sexuality and fecundity inverted by death; unnatural sickness
- Compared to a flower; yet the air smells putrid
- It's sexual potency is replaced by the fecundity of flies and larvae
- Dog wants to eat it!
- Human reduced to carnal element, even his Lover
- Parody of the Carpe Diem

Albatross

■ Often, to amuse themselves, men of the crew
Lay hold of the Albatross, large birds of the sea,
Who follow, indolent companions of the voyage,
The ship, gliding upon the bitter abyss.

Hardly have they disentangled him from the nets,
Than this king of the Sky, awkward and ashamed,
Allows, pitifully, his grand, white wings
Like oars at his side, to trail.

This winged traveler, how drab and weak,
He, who a moment ago flew so well, how comical and ugly!
One irritates his beak with a burning stick,
Another mimics, by limping, his weakness which amuses.

The Poet is similar to the Prince of clouds
Who haunt the storm and laugh at arrows
Exiled on Earth in the middle of the crowd,
His giant wings prevent him from walking.

- Romantics saw Poet as Salvational, but B. sees Rejection
- Poet stands out as an object of ridicule
- Yet, he has the power to fly majestically like the Albatross

“Windows”

- From “Poems in Prose”
- Windows as a symbol of city life
- Reflect both our alienation from others and our connection to them
- Voyeuristic
- Realistic
- Poet as imaginer of other’s reality asserts his own reality

Summary

- The Romantic Impulse is Present in the focus upon the artists Imagination
- But whereas Romantics idealize Nature, Baudelaire sees it as needing the artists' organizing control
- B. finds Beauty in holding a mirror up to Nature and showing it for it is: Hard, Cruel, Implacable
- Love and Beauty are shown in real things, even those that are common, ugly, or strange