

estranged from life, we're all cripples, every one of us, more or less. We've become so estranged that at times we feel some kind of revulsion for genuine "real life," and therefore we can't bear to be reminded of it. Why, we've reached a point where we almost regard "real life" as hard work, as a job, and we've all agreed in private that it's really better in books. And why do we sometimes fuss, indulge in whims, and make demands? We don't know ourselves. It'd be even worse if all our whimsical desires were fulfilled. Go on, try it. Give us, for example, a little more independence; untie the hands of any one of us, broaden our sphere of activity, relax the controls, and . . . I can assure you, we'll immediately ask to have the controls reinstated. I know that you may get angry at me for saying this, you may shout and stamp your feet: "Speak for yourself," you'll say, "and for your own miseries in the underground, but don't you dare say 'all of us.'" If you'll allow me, gentlemen; after all, I'm not trying to justify myself by saying *all of us*. What concerns me in particular, is that in my life I've only taken to an extreme that which you haven't even dared to take halfway; what's more, you've mistaken your cowardice for good sense; and, in so deceiving yourself, you've consoled yourself. So, in fact, I may even be "more alive" than you are. Just take a closer look! Why, we don't even know where this "real life" lives nowadays, what it really is, and what it's called. Leave us alone without books and we'll get confused and lose our way at once—we won't know what to join, what to hold on to, what to love or what to hate, what to respect or what to despise. We're even oppressed by being men—men with real bodies and blood of *our very own*. We're ashamed of it; we consider it a disgrace and we strive to become some kind of impossible "general-human-beings." We're stillborn; for some time now we haven't been conceived by living fathers; we like it more and more. We're developing a taste for it. Soon we'll conceive of a way to be born from ideas. But enough; I don't want to write any more "from Underground. . . ."

However, the "notes" of this paradoxalist don't end here. He couldn't resist and kept on writing. But it also seems to us that we might as well stop here.

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## CHARLES BAUDELAIRE

1821–1867

Few writers have had such impact on succeeding generations as Charles Baudelaire, called both the "first modern poet" and the "father of modern criticism." Nor is his reputation confined to the West, for Baudelaire is the most widely read French poet around the globe. Yet for a long time Baudelaire's literary image was dominated by his reputation as a scandalous writer whose blatant eroticism and open fascination with evil outraged all right-thinking people. Both he and Flaubert were brought to trial in 1857 for "offenses against public and religious morals"—Flaubert for *Madame Bovary* and Baudelaire for his just-published book of poetry

*Les Fleurs de Mal* (The flowers of evil). Some of this reputation is justified; the poet did intend to shock, and he displayed in painfully vivid scenes his own spiritual and sensual torment. Haunted by a religiously framed vision of human nature as fallen and corrupt, he lucidly analyzed his own weaknesses as well as the hypocrisy and sins he found in society. Lust, hatred, laziness, a disabling self-awareness that ironized all emotions, a horror of death and decay, and finally an apathy that swallowed up all other vices—all contrasted bitterly with the poet's dreams of a lost Eden, an ideal harmony of being. Perfection existed only in the distance: in scenes of erotic love, faraway voyages, or artistic beauty created often out of ugliness and crude reality. Baudelaire's ability to present realistic detail inside larger symbolic horizons, his constant use of imagery and suggestion, his consummate craftsmanship and the intense musicality of his verse made him a precursor of Symbolism and, in the words of T. S. Eliot, "the greatest exemplar in *modern* poetry in any language."

Baudelaire was born in Paris on April 9, 1821. His father died when he was six, and his widowed mother married Captain (later General) Jacques Aupick a year later. In 1832 the family moved to Lyons, and young Charles was placed in boarding school; in 1836, Aupick and his family were reassigned to Paris. Throughout his life Baudelaire remained greatly attached to his mother and detested his disciplinarian stepfather. He was a rebellious and difficult youth whose unconventional behavior and extravagant lifestyle continued to worry his family, especially after he turned twenty-one and received his father's inheritance. In 1844, they obtained a court order to supervise his finances, and from then on the poet subsisted on allowances paid by a notary.

In contrast to the Romantics with their love of nature and pastoral scenes, Baudelaire was a city poet fascinated by the variety and excitement of modern urban life. Living in Paris, he collaborated with other writers, published poems, translations, and criticism in different journals, and in 1842 began a lifelong liaison with Jeanne Duval, the "black Venus" of many poems. When he read Edgar Allan Poe for the first time, he was struck by the similarity of their ideas: by Poe's dedication to beauty, his fascination with bizarre images and death, and above all by his emphasis on craftsmanship and perfectly controlled art. Baudelaire's translations of Poe, collected in five volumes published from 1856 to 1865, were immensely popular and introduced the American writer to a broad European audience.

Public scandal greeted the appearance in 1857 of Baudelaire's major work, *The Flowers of Evil*. French authorities, already annoyed at Flaubert's acquittal, seized the book immediately. Less than two months later, the poet and his publisher were condemned to pay a fine and to delete six poems. A second edition with more poems appeared in 1861, and new lyrics were added to later printings. By now the poet was also well known as a critic. He championed the modern art of his time, interpreting and upholding the spirit of modernity in the art criticism of his 1845, 1846, and 1859 *Salons*, in remarkable studies of the painters Eugène Delacroix and Constantin Guys, and in a spirited defense of the German composer Richard Wagner. Baudelaire started publishing prose poetry at the beginning of the 1860s, experimenting with a form that was almost unknown in France and in which he hoped to achieve "the miracle of a poetic prose, musical without rhythm or rhyme, able . . . to adapt itself to the soul's lyric movements, to the undulations of reverie, to the sudden starts of consciousness." A slim book of twenty prose poems appeared in 1862; the complete *Prose Poems* (also called *Paris Spleen*) would contain fifty poems in all. Baudelaire's health was precarious during these years. In 1862, he had what was apparently a minor stroke, which he called a "warning" and described with characteristically vivid imagery: "I felt pass over me a draft of wind



from imbecility's wing." Four years later, in Belgium, he was stricken with aphasia and hemiplegia; unable to speak, he was brought back to Paris where he died on August 31, 1867.

His audience was never far from Baudelaire's mind. He wished to shock, to startle, to make the reader rethink cherished ideas and values. In the prefatory poem to *The Flowers of Evil*, *To the Reader*, Baudelaire ends a catalogue of human vices by insisting that both he and the reader are caught in a common guilt: "You—hypocrite Reader—my double—my brother!" The poet's insistent theme of *ennui* (pathological boredom or apathy) occurs here at the beginning of the book: it is the melancholy inertia that keeps human beings from acting either for good or for evil, placing them outside the realm of choice much as Dante relegated to Limbo those who were unwilling to take a moral stand. (In Catholic theology, such spiritual inertia is termed *acedia*.) This *spleen*, as it is also called (from the part of the body governing a splenic or bilious humor), appears throughout *The Flowers of Evil* as an insidious, debilitating force. In *To the Reader* Baudelaire argues that the Devil's most terrifying weapon against humankind is not the litany of sins so colorfully described, but rather his ability to diminish the possibility of action: to evaporate—like a chemist in a laboratory—the precious metal of human will.

*The Voyage*, placed by Baudelaire at the end of the collection, describes the opposite of inertia: an active search for goals always out of reach. A long poem written in eight sections and intended, according to the poet, to upset current faith in human progress, *The Voyage* describes "progress" as a series of temporary advances that end in disappointment and disgust. These smaller achievements—discovering new lands, inventing new luxuries, gaining fame and fortune, seeking ecstasy in sadism and sensuality—are all bound to deceive because they are merely symbols of a larger unending voyage: the quest for the infinite. Since human beings contain an "inner [spiritual] infinite" they cannot be satisfied with any limits and must constantly travel toward the unknown and the new. The last line, "In the depths of the Unknown, we'll discover the New!" became a famous rallying cry for generations who sought new insights by exploring such unmapped frontiers.

Baudelaire alternates between acid melancholy and glimpses of happiness. Not all voyages are unhappy; one of his rare contented and even tender poems is the lyrical *Invitation to the Voyage*, a lover's invitation to an exotic land of peace, beauty, and sensuous harmony. The voyage is imaginary, of course, implying two forms of escape from reality: an escape out of real time into a primeval accord of the senses, and an escape into another artistic vision—the glowing interiors painted by such Dutch masters as Jan Vermeer. A similar but more cynical voyage of escape occurs in *Her Hair*. Here the poet, abandoning himself to passion, buries his face in the dark tide of his mistress's hair as if to submerge himself in the dark ocean of dream. This escape is available only on a temporary basis, however; the woman remains his "oasis" only so long as he adorns her hair with jewels. In both these poems, and in Baudelaire's poetry in general, we must admit that women do not exist as separate personalities but rather as foils for poetic inspiration: conventional images of beauty, coldness, vision, or vice given one or another form. Similarly, the woman in *The Carcass* exists only as an appropriate listener in a poem that mocks Petrarchan ideals of feminine beauty. Nor are men better treated; they appear not as individuals but generically, in groups, or they are addressed as brothers (or doubles) of the poet himself. Baudelaire's poetry is governed by a strong subjective impulse, no matter how much he reaches into the world for the raw material of his complex imaginative universe.

Baudelaire was convinced that "every good poet has always been a realist," and

he himself was a master of realistic details used for effects that go beyond conventional or photographic realism. The rhythmic thump of firewood being delivered is repeated throughout *Song of Autumn I*, where it coordinates ascending images of death. Maggots swarm over a dead body in "The Carcass," and yet there is a strange beauty in this evocation of a buzzing, vibrating new life superimposed on the now-blurred outlines of a decaying animal carcass. The poem's ostensible theme is familiar—*carpe diem*, "seize the day" or "think of the future and love me now," since only a poet can preserve beauty—but one has only to compare Yeats's poem, *When You Are Old*, to recognize the harshness of this address to the beloved. The mixture of tones is more subtle in the *Spleen* poems, celebrated for their evocation of gray misery. Here Baudelaire inserts mundane items like mangy cats, decks of cards, old-fashioned clothes, uncorked perfume bottles, and noisy rainspouts. Such down-to-earth details give substance to concurrent mythical or allegorical scenes. A chill revelation of mortality emerges from the sequence of thoroughly practical references to water in *Spleen LXXVIII*, beginning with the rain and fog in the city and including a cat twisting and turning uncomfortably on clammy tiles, the whine of a rainspout, the wheeze of wet wood and a damp clock pendulum, and finally a deck of cards left by an old woman who died of dropsy. If the sequence is interesting as a tour de force of linked images, it also serves cumulatively to evoke an atmosphere of lethargy and decay climaxing in a tiny, altogether unrealistic final scene in which two face cards talk sinisterly of their past loves.

Similar themes are to be found in the prose poems published as *Little Poems in Prose* or *Paris Spleen* and generally seen as the first important example of the prose poem although Baudelaire did not actually originate the genre. He was keenly aware, however, of the need for poetic prose to also find its own way to be musical "without rhyme." Stanzas become paragraphs; rhythm is created through variations in sentence length, syntax, and sound patterns, and also through the juxtaposition of scenes and tones. Rhythm is undeniably present, however changed: it is audible in the triple cadence ending *Windows* (helping him "to live, to feel that I am, and what I am") or in the contrasting dialogue leading up to the soul's explosion at the end of *Anywhere out of the World*.

The realism that is often buried in the lyrics of *The Flowers of Evil* appears on the surface in the prose poems. Baudelaire recasts *The Voyage's* unending search for new experiences as an imaginary dialogue in *Anywhere out of the World*, and ponders his solitude and the nature of creative genius in *Windows*. In *Windows*, after having deduced the life story of an old woman seen across the roofs, he ends by saying that her story is only a "legend"—or, at least, that he does not care whether it is true so long as it provides a point of departure for his own imagination. Correspondingly, the poet relishes crowds because, moving among so many people, he is able to imagine himself in their place: "to be himself or someone else, as he chooses." In each case the artist is visibly alone, experiencing either the melancholy of *spleen* or the joy of an artistic imagination that creates and populates its own world. In verse or in prose, the alternation between dream and reality continues.

Baudelaire is a complex and ironic poet, an inheritor of that Romantic irony that wishes to embrace all the opposites of human existence: good and evil, love and hate, self and other, dream and reality. His is a universe of relationships, of echoes and correspondences. His best-known poem, in fact, is the sonnet *Correspondences*. This poem describes a vision of the mystic unity of all nature, which is demonstrated by the reciprocity of our five senses (*synesthesia*). Nature, says the poet, is a system of perpetual analogies in which one thing always corresponds to another—physical objects to each other (colonnades in a temple, for example, to



trees in the forest), spiritual reality to physical reality, and the five senses (taste, smell, touch, sight, and hearing) among themselves—to produce such combinations as “bitter green,” a “soft look,” or “a harsh sound.” Human beings are not usually aware of the “universal analogy”—the forest of the first stanza watches us without our knowing it—but it is the role of the poet to act as seer and guide, urging us toward a state of awareness where both mind and senses fuse in another dimension. *Correspondences* is no vaguely intuitive poem, however. Even though it describes a state of ecstatic awareness, it works through the stages of a logical argument. The thesis is set out in the first stanza, explained in the second, and illustrated with cumulative examples in the third and fourth. Baudelaire’s yearning for mystic harmony does not make him neglect either a base in reality or a rigorous application of intellect. His fusion of idealist vision, realistic detail, and artistic discipline made him the most influential poet of the nineteenth century, and the first poet of the modern age.

The selections printed here, from a range of Baudelaire’s most influential lyric and prose poems, are translated by different modern poets. While remaining faithful to the original text, each translation necessarily stresses different aspects (for example, images, meter and rhyme, word order, tone, a particular set of associations when more than one is possible) to create a genuine English poem. The footnotes occasionally point out elements that are especially significant in the French text.

Lois Boe Hyslop, *Charles Baudelaire Revisited* (1992), is a useful introductory survey. Enid Starkie, *Baudelaire* (1953), is the fullest biography in English. Henri Peyre, ed., *Baudelaire: A Collection of Critical Essays* (1962), contains eleven essays on *The Flowers of Evil*, with selections by major writers including Proust. Harold Bloom, ed., *Charles Baudelaire* (1987), presents ten contemporary critics on Baudelaire’s themes, literary and artistic criticism, selected texts, and relation to Poe. Patricia Clements, *Baudelaire and the English Tradition* (1985), is a penetrating analysis of Baudelaire’s influence on English literature from Swinburne to T. S. Eliot; it includes comparisons and contrasts with late symbolist tradition. Margery A. Evans, *Baudelaire and Intertextuality: Poetry at the Crossroads* (1993), analyzes the literary conventions manipulated in the prose poems. Rosemary Lloyd’s *Selected Letters of Charles Baudelaire: The Conquest of Solitude* (1986) contains a range of personal and literary letters. Laurence M. Porter, *The Crisis of French Symbolism* (1990), has a interesting chapter on Baudelaire’s relation to his imagined audience. F. W. Leakey, *Baudelaire, Les Fleurs du Mal* (1992), is a short guide to the poet’s major work.

#### PRONOUNCING GLOSSARY

The following list uses common English syllables and stress accents to provide rough equivalents of selected words whose pronunciation may be unfamiliar to the general reader.

Baudelaire: *boh-d'lair'*

ennui: *on-wee'*

Pylades: *pill'-ah-deez*

## THE FLOWERS OF EVIL

### To the Reader<sup>1</sup>

Infatuation, sadism, lust, avarice  
possess our souls and drain the body’s force;  
we spoonfeed our adorable remorse,  
like whores or beggars nourishing their lice.

Our sins are mulish, our confessions lies; 5  
we play to the grandstand with our promises,  
we pray for tears to wash our filthiness,  
importantly pissing hogwash through our styes.

The devil, watching by our sickbeds, hissed 10  
old smut and folk-songs to our soul, until  
the soft and precious metal of our will  
boiled off in vapor for this scientist.

Each day his flattery<sup>2</sup> makes us eat a toad,  
and each step forward is a step to hell,  
unmoved, though previous corpses and their smell 15  
asphyxiate our progress on this road.

Like the poor lush who cannot satisfy,  
we try to force our sex with counterfeits,  
die drooling on the deliquescent tits,  
mouthing the rotten orange we suck dry. 20

Gangs of demons are boozing in our brain—  
ranked, swarming, like a million warrior-ants,<sup>3</sup>  
they drown and choke the cistern of our wants;  
each time we breathe, we tear our lungs with pain.

If poison, arson, sex, narcotics, knives 25  
have not yet ruined us and stitched their quick,  
loud patterns on the canvas of our lives,  
it is because our souls are still too sick.<sup>4</sup>

Among the vermin, jackals, panthers, lice,  
gorillas and tarantulas that suck 30  
and snatch and scratch and defecate and fuck  
in the disorderly circus of our vice,

there’s one more ugly and abortive birth.  
It makes no gestures, never beats its breast,  
yet it would murder for a moment’s rest,<sup>5</sup> 35  
and willingly annihilate the earth.

It’s BOREDOM. Tears have glued its eyes together.  
You know it well, my Reader. This obscene  
beast chain-smokes yawning for the guillotine—  
you—hypocrite Reader—my double—my brother! 40

1. Translated by Robert Lowell. The translation pays primary attention to the insistent rhythm of the original poetic language and keeps the *abba* rhyme scheme. 2. The Devil is literally described as a puppet master controlling our strings. 3. Literally, intestinal worms. 4. Literally, not bold enough. 5. Literally, swallow the world in a yawn.



Correspondences<sup>1</sup>

Nature is a temple whose living colonnades  
Breathe forth a mystic speech in fitful sighs;  
Man wanders among symbols in those glades  
Where all things watch him with familiar eyes.

Like dwindling echoes gathered far away  
Into a deep and thronging unison  
Huge as the night or as the light of day,  
All scents and sounds and colors meet as one.

Perfumes there are as sweet as the oboe's sound,  
Green as the prairies, fresh as a child's caress,<sup>2</sup>  
—And there are others, rich, corrupt, profound<sup>3</sup>

And of an infinite pervasiveness,  
Like myrrh, or musk, or amber,<sup>4</sup> that excite  
The ecstasies of sense, the soul's delight.

## Correspondances

La Nature est un temple où de vivants piliers  
Laisent parfois sortir de confuses paroles;  
L'homme y passe à travers des forêts de symboles  
Qui l'observent avec des regards familiers.

Comme de longs échos qui de loin se confondent  
Dans une ténébreuse et profonde unité,  
Vaste comme la nuit et comme la clarté,  
Les parfums, les couleurs et les sons se répendent.

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.

Her Hair<sup>1</sup>

O fleece, that down the neck waves to the nape!  
O curls! O perfume nonchalant and rare!  
O ecstasy! To fill this alcove<sup>2</sup> shape  
With memories that in these tresses sleep,  
I would shake them like pennons in the air!

1. Translated by Richard Wilbur. The translation keeps the intricate melody of the sonnet's original rhyme scheme. 2. Literally, flesh. 3. Literally, triumphant. 4. Or ambergris, a substance secreted by whales. Ambergris and musk (a secretion of the male musk deer) are used in making perfume. 1. Translated by Doreen Bell. The translation emulates the French original's challenging *abaab* rhyme pattern. 2. Bedroom.

Languorous Asia, burning Africa,  
And a far world, defunct almost, absent,  
Within your aromatic forest stay!  
As other souls on music drift away,  
Mine, o my love! still floats upon your scent.

I shall go there where, full of sap, both tree  
And man swoon in the heat of southern climes;  
Strong tresses, be the swell that carries me!  
I dream upon your sea of ebony  
Of dazzling sails, of oarsmen, masts and flames:

A sun-drenched and reverberating port,  
Where I imbibe color and sound and scent;  
Where vessels, gliding through the gold and moire,  
Open their vast arms as they leave the shore  
To clasp the pure and shimmering firmament.

I'll plunge my head, enamored of its pleasure,  
In this black ocean where the other hides;  
My subtle spirit then will know a measure  
Of fertile idleness and fragrant leisure,  
Lulled by the infinite rhythm of its tides!

Pavilion, of blue-shadowed tresses spun,  
You give me back the azure from afar;  
And where the twisted locks are fringed with down  
Lurk mingled odors I grow drunk upon  
Of oil of coconut, of musk and tar.

A long time! always! my hand in your hair  
Will sow the stars of sapphire, pearl, ruby,  
That you be never deaf to my desire,  
My oasis and gourd whence I aspire  
To drink deep of the wine of memory!<sup>3</sup>

A Carcass<sup>1</sup>

Remember, my love, the item you saw  
That beautiful morning in June:  
By a bend in the path a carcass reclined  
On a bed sown with pebbles and stones;

Her legs were spread out like a lecherous whore,  
Sweating out poisonous fumes,  
Who opened in slick invitational style  
Her stinking and festering womb.

The sun on this rotteness focused its rays  
To cook the cadaver till done,  
And render to Nature a hundredfold gift  
Of all she'd united in one.

3. The last two lines are a question: "Are you not . . . ?" 1. Translated by James McGowan with special attention to imagery. The alternation of long and short lines in English emulates the French meter's rhythmic swing between twelve-syllable and eight-syllable lines in an *abab* rhyme scheme.



And the sky cast an eye on this marvelous meat  
 As over the flowers in bloom.  
 The stench was so wretched that there on the grass 15  
 You nearly collapsed in a swoon.  
 The flies buzzed and droned on these bowels of filth  
 Where an army of maggots arose,  
 Which flowed like a liquid and thickening stream  
 On the animate rags of her clothes.<sup>2</sup> 20  
 And it rose and it fell, and pulsed like a wave,  
 Rushing and bubbling with health.  
 One could say that this carcass, blown with vague breath,  
 Lived in increasing itself.  
 And this whole teeming world made a musical sound 25  
 Like babbling brooks and the breeze,  
 Or the grain that a man with a winnowing-fan  
 Turns with a rhythmical ease.  
 The shapes wore away as if only a dream  
 Like a sketch that is left on the page 30  
 Which the artist forgot and can only complete  
 On the canvas, with memory's aid.  
 From back in the rocks, a pitiful bitch  
 Eyed us with angry distaste,  
 Awaiting the moment to snatch from the bones 35  
 The morsel she'd dropped in her haste.  
 —And you, in your turn, will be rotten as this:  
 Horrible, filthy, undone,  
 Oh sun of my nature and star of my eyes,  
 My passion, my angel<sup>3</sup> in one! 40  
 Yes, such will you be, oh regent of grace,  
 After the rites have been read,  
 Under the weeds, under blossoming grass  
 As you molder with bones of the dead.  
 Ah then, oh my beauty, explain to the worms 45  
 Who cherish your body so fine,  
 That I am the keeper for corpses of love  
 Of the form, and the essence divine!<sup>4</sup>

### Invitation to the Voyage<sup>1</sup>

My child, my sister, dream  
 How sweet all things would seem  
 Were we in that kind land to live together,

2. By extension. The torn flesh is described as "living rags." 3. Series of conventional Petrarchan images that idealize the beloved. 4. "Any form created by man is immortal. For form is independent of matter. . . ." from Baudelaire's journal *My Heart Laid Bare*, LXXX. 1. Translated by Richard Wilbur. The translation maintains both the rhyme scheme and the rocking motion of the original meter, which follows an unusual pattern of two five-syllable lines followed by one seven-syllable line, and a seven-syllable couplet as refrain.

And there love slow and long,  
 There love and die among 5  
 Those scenes that image you, that sumptuous weather.  
 Drowned suns that glimmer there  
 Through cloud-disheveled air  
 Move me with such a mystery as appears  
 Within those other skies 10  
 Of your treacherous eyes  
 When I behold them shining through their tears.  
 There, there is nothing else but grace and measure,  
 Richness, quietness, and pleasure.  
 Furniture that wears 15  
 The lustre of the years  
 Softly would glow within our glowing chamber,  
 Flowers of rarest bloom  
 Proffering their perfume  
 Mixed with the vague fragrances of amber; 20  
 Gold ceilings would there be,  
 Mirrors deep as the sea,  
 The walls all in an Eastern splendor hung—  
 Nothing but should address  
 The soul's loneliness, 25  
 Speaking her sweet and secret native tongue.  
 There, there is nothing else but grace and measure,  
 Richness, quietness, and pleasure.  
 See, sheltered from the swells  
 There in the still canals 30  
 Those drowsy ships that dream of sailing forth;  
 It is to satisfy  
 Your least desire, they ply  
 Hither through all the waters of the earth.  
 The sun at close of day 35  
 Clothes the fields of hay,  
 Then the canals, at last the town entire  
 In hyacinth and gold:  
 Slowly the land is rolled  
 Sleepward under a sea of gentle fire. 40  
 There, there is nothing else but grace and measure,  
 Richness, quietness, and pleasure.

### Song of Autumn I<sup>1</sup>

Soon we shall plunge into the chilly fogs;  
 Farewell, swift light! our summers are too short!  
 I hear already the mournful fall of logs  
 Re-echoing from the pavement of the court.

1. Translated by C. F. MacIntyre to follow the original rhyme pattern.



All of winter will gather in my soul:  
 Hate, anger, horror, chills, the hard forced work;  
 And, like the sun in his hell by the north pole,  
 My heart will be only a red and frozen block.

I shudder, hearing every log that falls;  
 No scaffold could be built with hollower sounds.  
 My spirit is like a tower whose crumbling walls  
 The tireless battering-ram brings to the ground.

It seems to me, lulled by monotonous shocks,  
 As if they were hastily nailing a coffin today.  
 For whom?—Yesterday was summer. Now autumn knocks.  
 That mysterious sound is like someone's going away.

### Spleen LXXVIII<sup>1</sup>

Old Pluvius,<sup>2</sup> month of rains, in peevish mood  
 Pours from his urn chill winter's sodden gloom  
 On corpses fading in the near graveyard,  
 On foggy suburbs pours life's tedium.

My cat seeks out a litter on the stones,  
 Her mangy body turning without rest.  
 An ancient poet's soul in monotones  
 Whines in the rain-spouts like a chilblained ghost.

A great bell mourns, a wet log wrapped in smoke  
 Sings in falsetto to the wheezing clock,  
 While from a rankly perfumed deck of cards  
 (A dropsical old crone's fatal bequest)  
 The Queen of Spades, the dapper Jack of Hearts  
 Speak darkly of dead loves, how they were lost.

### Spleen LXXIX<sup>1</sup>

I have more memories than if I had lived a thousand years.

Even a bureau crammed with souvenirs,  
 Old bills, love letters, photographs, receipts,  
 Court depositions, locks of hair in plaits,  
 Hides fewer secrets than my brain could yield.  
 It's like a tomb, a corpse-filled Potter's Field,<sup>2</sup>  
 A pyramid where the dead lie down by scores.

1. Translated by Kenneth O. Hanson, with emphasis on the imagery. The French original uses identical *abab* rhymes in the two quatrains and shifts to *ccd, eed* in the tercets. 2. Pluvius is literally "the rainy time" (Latin), a period extending from January 20 to February 18 as the fifth month of the French Revolutionary calendar. 1. Translated by Anthony Hecht. The translation follows the original rhymed couplets except for one technical impossibility: Baudelaire's repetition (in a poem about monotony) of an identical rhyme for eight lines (lines 11–18, the sound of long *a*). 2. A general term describing the common cemetery for those buried at public expense.

I am a graveyard that the moon abhors:  
 Like guilty qualms, the worms burrow and nest  
 Thickly in bodies that I loved the best.  
 I'm a stale boudoir where old-fashioned clothes  
 Lie scattered among wilted fern and rose,  
 Where only the Boucher girls<sup>3</sup> in pale pastels  
 Can breathe the uncorked scents and faded smells.

Nothing can equal those days for endlessness  
 When in the winter's blizzardly caress  
 Indifference expanding to Ennui<sup>4</sup>  
 Takes on the feel of Immortality.  
 O living matter, henceforth you're no more  
 Than a cold stone encompassed by vague fear  
 And by the desert, and the mist and sun;  
 An ancient Sphinx ignored by everyone,  
 Left off the map, whose bitter irony  
 Is to sing as the sun sets in that dry sea.<sup>5</sup>

### PARIS SPLEEN<sup>1</sup>

#### Anywhere out of the World<sup>2</sup>

Life is a hospital where every patient is obsessed by the desire of changing beds. One would like to suffer opposite the stove, another is sure he would get well beside the window.

It always seems to me that I should be happy anywhere but where I am, and this question of moving is one that I am eternally discussing with my soul.

"Tell me, my soul, poor chilly soul, how would you like to live in Lisbon? It must be warm there, and you would be as blissful as a lizard in the sun. It is a city by the sea; they say that it is built of marble, and that its inhabitants have such a horror of the vegetable kingdom that they tear up all the trees. You see it is a country after my own heart; a country entirely made of mineral and light, and with liquid to reflect them."

My soul does not reply.

"Since you are so fond of being motionless and watching the pageantry of movement, would you like to live in the beatific land of Holland? Perhaps you could enjoy yourself in that country which you have so long admired in paintings on museum walls. What do you say to Rotterdam,<sup>3</sup> you who love forests of masts, and ships that are moored on the doorsteps of houses?"

3. François Boucher (1703–1770), court painter for Louis XV of France, drew many pictures of young women clothed and nude. 4. Melancholy, paralyzing boredom. 5. Baudelaire combines two references to ancient Egypt, the sphinx and the legendary statue of Memnon at Thebes, which was supposed to sing at sunset. 1. Translated by Louise Varèse. 2. The title (given in English by Baudelaire) is based on a line from Thomas Hood's poem *Bridge of Sighs*: "Anywhere, anywhere—out of the world." Baudelaire probably found the reference in Poe's *Poetic Principle*. 3. Large Dutch seaport.



My soul remains silent.

"Perhaps you would like Batavia<sup>4</sup> better? There, moreover, we should find the wit of Europe wedded to the beauty of the tropics."

Not a word. Can my soul be dead?

"Have you sunk into so deep a stupor that you are happy only in your unhappiness? If that is the case, let us fly to countries that are the counterfeits of Death. I know just the place for us, poor soul. We will pack up our trunks for Torneo.<sup>5</sup> We will go still farther, to the farthest end of the Baltic Sea; still farther from life if possible; we will settle at the Pole. There the sun only obliquely grazes the earth, and the slow alternations of daylight and night abolish variety and increase that other half of nothingness, monotony. There we can take deep baths of darkness, while sometimes for our entertainment, the Aurora Borealis will shoot up its rose-red sheafs like the reflections of the fireworks of hell!"

At last my soul explodes! "Anywhere! Just so it is out of the world!"

4. Former name of Djakarta, capital of the Dutch East Indies and now the capital city of Indonesia.  
5. A city in Finland.

## LEO TOLSTOY

1828–1910

Count Leo Tolstoy excited the interest of Europe mainly as a public figure: a count owning large estates who decided to give up his wealth and live like a simple Russian peasant—to dress in a blouse, to eat peasant food, and even to plow the fields and make shoes with his own hands. By the time of his death he had become the leader of a religious cult, the propounder of a new religion. It was, in substance, a highly simplified primitive Christianity that he reduced to a few moral commands (such as, "Do not resist evil") and from which he drew, with radical consistency, a complete condemnation of modern civilization: the state, courts and law, war, patriotism, marriage, modern art and literature, science and medicine. In debating this Christian anarchism people have tended to forget that Tolstoy established his command of the public ear as a novelist, or they have exaggerated the contrast between the early worldly novelist and the later prophet who repudiated all his early, great novelistic work: *War and Peace*, the enormous epic of the 1812 invasion of Russia, and *Anna Karenina*, the story of an adulterous love, superbly realized in accurately imagined detail.

Tolstoy was born at Yásnaya Polyána, his mother's estate near Tula (about 130 miles south of Moscow), on August 28, 1828. His father was a retired lieutenant colonel; one of his ancestors, the first count, had served Peter the Great as an ambassador. His mother's father was a Russian general-in-chief. Tolstoy lost both parents early in his life and was brought up by aunts. He went to the University of Kazan between 1844 and 1847, drifted along aimlessly for a few years more, and in 1851 became a cadet in the Caucasus. As an artillery officer he saw action in the wars with the mountain tribes and again, in 1854–55, during the Crimean War against the French and English. Tolstoy had written fictional reminiscences of his childhood while he was in the Caucasus, and during the Crimean War he wrote war stories, which established his literary reputation. For some years he lived

on his estate, where he founded and himself taught an extremely "progressive" school for peasant children. He made two trips to western Europe, in 1857 and in 1860–61. In 1862 he married the daughter of a physician, Sonya Bers, with whom he had thirteen children.

In the first years of his married life, between 1863 and 1869, he wrote his enormous novel *War and Peace*. The book made him famous in Russia but was not translated into English until long afterward. Superficially, *War and Peace* is an historical novel about the Napoléonic invasion of Russia in 1812, a huge swarming epic of a nation's resistance to the foreigner. Tolstoy himself interprets history in general as a struggle of anonymous collective forces that are moved by unknown irrational impulses, waves of communal feeling. Heroes, great men and women, are actually not heroes but merely insignificant puppets; the best general is the one who does nothing to prevent the unknown course of Providence. But *War and Peace* is not only an impressive and vivid panorama of historical events but also the profound story—centered in two main characters, Pierre Bezukhov and Prince Andrey Bolkonsky—of a search for meaning in life. Andrey finds meaning in love and forgiveness of his enemies. Pierre, at the end of a long groping struggle, an education by suffering, finds it in an acceptance of ordinary existence, its duties and pleasures, the family, the continuity of the race.

Tolstoy's next long novel, *Anna Karenina* (1875–77), resumes this second thread of *War and Peace*. It is a novel of contemporary manners, a narrative of adultery and suicide. But this vivid story, told with incomparable concrete imagination, is counterpointed and framed by a second story, that of Levin, another seeker after the meaning of life, a figure who represents the author as Pierre did in the earlier book; the work ends with a promise of salvation, with the ideal of a life in which we should "remember God." Thus *Anna Karenina* also anticipates the approaching crisis in Tolstoy's life. When it came, with the sudden revulsion he describes in *A Confession* (1879), he condemned his earlier books and spent the next years in writing pamphlets and tracts expounding his religion.

Only slowly did Tolstoy return to the writing of fiction, now regarded entirely as a means of presenting his creed. The earlier novels seemed to him unclear in their message, overdetailed in their method. Hence Tolstoy tried to simplify his art; he wrote plays with a thesis, stories that are like fables or parables, and one long, rather inferior novel, *The Resurrection* (1899), his most savage satire on Russian and modern institutions.

In 1901 Tolstoy was excommunicated. A disagreement with his wife about the nature of the good life and about financial matters sharpened into a conflict over his last will, which finally led to a complete break: he left home in the company of a doctor friend. He caught cold on the train journey south and died in the house of the stationmaster of Astápovo, on November 20, 1910.

If we look back on Tolstoy's work as a whole, we must recognize its continuity. From the very beginning he was a Rousseauist. As early as 1851, when he was in the Caucasus, his diary announced his intention of founding a new, simplified religion. Even as a young man on his estate he had lived quite simply, like a peasant, except for occasional sprees and debauches. He had been horrified by war from the very beginning, though he admired the heroism of the individual soldier and had remnants of patriotic feeling. All his books concern the same theme, the good life, and they all say that the good life lies outside of civilization, near to the soil, in simplicity and humility, in love of one's neighbor. Power, the lust for power, luxury, are always evil.

Tolstoy's roots as a novelist are part of another, older realistic tradition. He read and knew the English writers of the eighteenth century—and also William Makepeace Thackeray and Anthony Trollope—though he did not care for the recent French writers (he was strong in his disapproval of Gustave Flaubert) except for