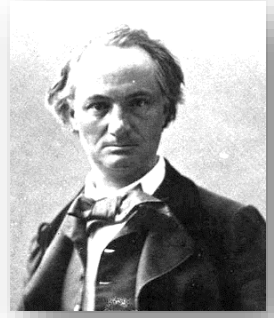


CHARLES BAUDELAIRE

1821-1867



The Albatross (“L’Albatros”)

Often, when bored, the sailors of the crew
Trap albatross, the great birds of the seas,
Mild travellers escorting in the blue
Ships gliding on the ocean’s mysteries.

5 And when the sailors have them on the planks,
Hurt and distraught, these kings of all outdoors
Piteously let trail along their flanks
Their great white wings, dragging like useless oars.

This voyager, how comical and weak!
10 Once handsome, how unseemly and inept!
One sailor pokes a pipe into his beak,
Another mocks the flier’s hobbled step.

The Poet is a kinsman in the clouds
Who scoffs at archers, loves a stormy day;
15 But on the ground, among the hooting crowds,
He cannot walk, his wings are in the way.

—Translated from the French by James McGowan

1859/1861

