

## **BAUDELAIRE, Charles** (1821-67).

Although his early childhood appears to have been happy, young Charles Baudelaire became sullen and withdrawn after his elderly father died in 1827 and his mother remarried. This experience may have produced the melancholy temperament that drove him to become an art critic and introspective poet.

The author of the erotic 'Les Fleurs du mal' (The Flowers of Evil, 1857), Baudelaire earned a high place in French literature and international renown as a symbolist poet. He also wrote an autobiographical novel, 'La Fanfarlo' (1847), critical essays that were collected in such books as 'L'Art romantique' (Romantic Art, 1868) and 'Curiosites esthetiques' (Aesthetic Curiosities, 1868), and volumes of essays, journals, and letters. His preoccupation with horror and the macabre never lessened his reputation.

Charles-Pierre Baudelaire was born in Paris on April 9, 1821. To discipline him, his stepfather sent him to a military school in Lyon. In Paris he was an indifferent law student and became addicted to drugs. His seemingly aimless and unproductive life led his parents to ship him off to India in 1841, but he returned home before the voyage was completed. The journey inspired his first poems.

An inheritance from his father in 1842 turned Baudelaire into a spendthrift. In two years he squandered half of his money; he was heavily in debt when the remainder was put in trust for him by his family.

In the 1850s Baudelaire first read the works of Edgar Allan Poe, the American writer. The years he spent translating and analyzing Poe's works ensured his reputation as a literary critic. His own writings, however, were not well received during his lifetime. He was prosecuted for obscenity and blasphemy, and some of his poems were banned. Baudelaire spent his last years in obscure poverty. He died in Paris on Aug. 31, 1867. Today he is considered one of the revolutionary European poets of the 19th century.