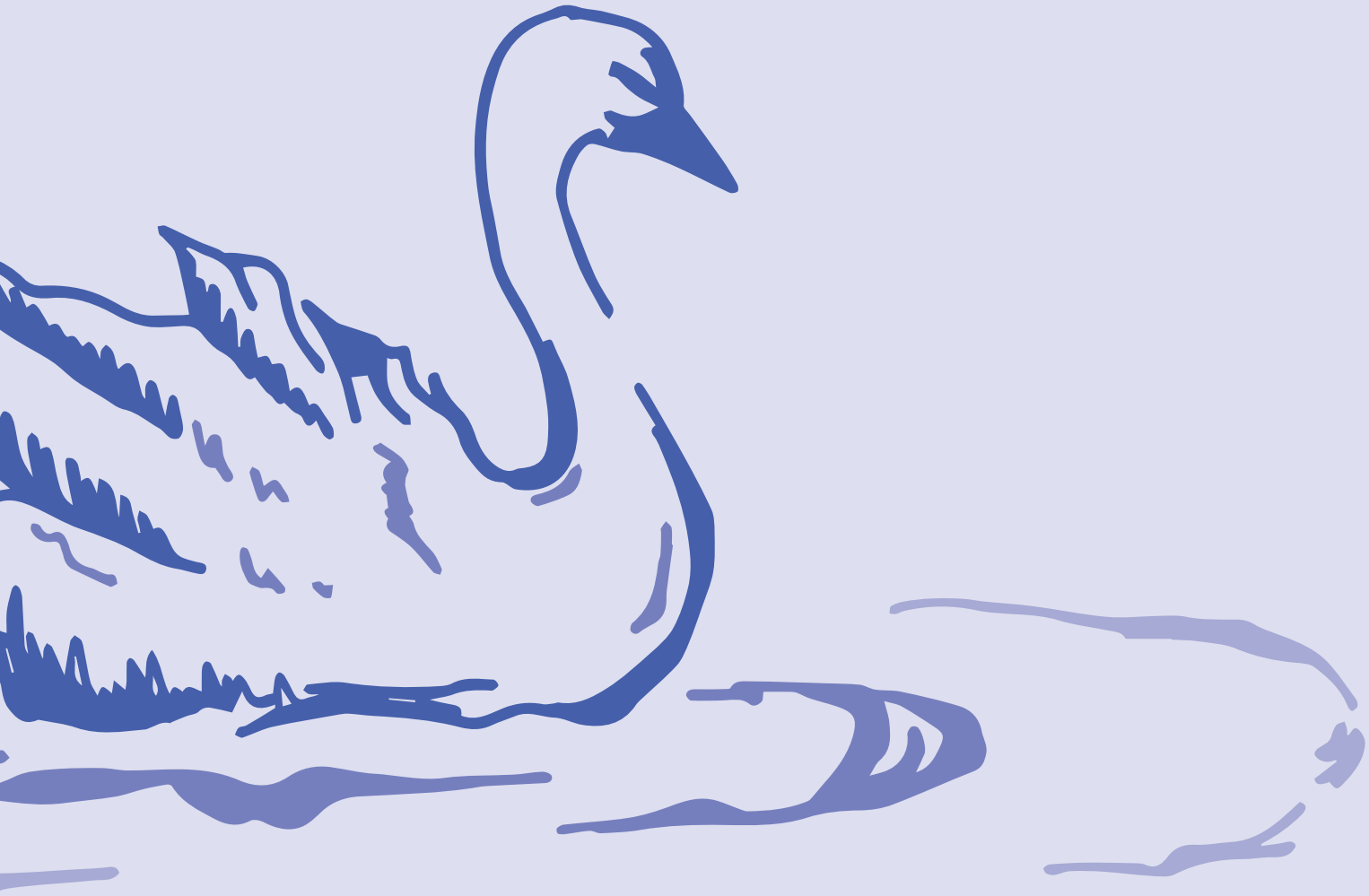

plumage

le cygne / the swan

issue.01

Editor's Note

Birds are extraordinary. They pollinate wildflowers, control pests, clean up ecosystems, disperse seeds, and transform entire landscapes. In the United States, hummingbirds are vital pollinators for wildflowers. Beyond their ecological roles, birds also have inspired human innovations and advances, such as Darwin's groundbreaking theories on evolution drawn from his observations of Galápagos finches, the technology of flight, or the invention of zippers modeled on feather barbules. But birds offer more than biological services and scientific inspiration: they are also storytellers of the natural world, acting as sentinels for environmental health because of their sensitivity to any environmental changes.

However, they are not just "useful" for the environment and a constant source of inspiration for science: because of their vibrant colors, graceful movements, and melodious songs, they have captivated the human imagination, sparking creativity across cultures and continents. Since the dawn of time (we can see representation of birds in prehistoric caves), artists have celebrated birds in paintings, poetry, music, and dance. Birds' mysterious seasonal migrations and their intricate relationships with nature have long served as muses for art and storytelling.

In my own research, I explored new ways of reading bird figures in texts and in visual artworks, tracing the question of zoopoetics across a variety of artistic genres and historical periods, and considering the exchanges of material and meaning between humans and nonhuman animals. Often, these works carry messages about ecology, the environment, and humanity's connection to the natural world.

I decided to launch the *Birds in Arts and Media* Vertically Integrated Project (VIP) at Georgia Tech to explore with Georgia Tech students what a shared fascination with birds can inspire. Through this project, I discovered that birds resonate strongly on our Georgia Tech campus. Students and faculty alike have expressed their enthusiasm, from admiring avian beauty and identifying bird species on campus to addressing pressing concerns such as bird collisions with campus buildings. Together with a group of passionate students, we've created this new online magazine, Plumage, as a reflection of our relationships with birds—both globally, through French and Francophone literature and visual arts, and locally, in Atlanta's ecosystems and scientific community.

Art and science are both fueled by curiosity and imagination. This magazine brings those worlds together in six sections: Bird of the Month, Arts and Culture, Stories, Interviews, Birds in Atlanta, and Games and Comics. For this inaugural issue, we chose to focus on one iconic bird: the swan. Elegant and mysterious, the swan has captivated our imagination for centuries. Many artists have, for example, used *Leda and Zeus'* iconic imagery, one of the most disturbing tales from Greek mythology. The Swan Lake ballet composed by Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky in 1875–76 is one of the most popular ballets of all time. In literature, music, painting, and contemporary dance the swan has an enduring presence. Beyond its artistic allure, the swan also serves as a symbol of ecological fragility and resilience, highlighting the pressing need to protect its threatened habitats.

We hope that this inaugural issue is the beginning of an ambitious project that bridges arts and sciences, aiming to explore birds' significance in diverse contexts—from creative works to ecological challenges. I am incredibly proud of this first group of students and hope that others will join us in the semesters to come. We hope you enjoy this first issue of our magazine, and we look forward to taking you on a journey through the inspiring world of birds.

- Dr. Stephanie Boulard, Professor of French Literature and Visual Arts
Georgia Institute of Technology

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Bird of the Month / *The Swan*

by Karen Zheng

Mute Swan / *cygnus olor*

Appearance: White plumage and orange bill and black knob at base of bill
Length (cm): around 125-160
Wingspan(cm): around 150-239
Weight(kg): between 8.62-11.79
Life Span: 15-25 years
Native: EuroSiberia and North Africa

Black Swan / *cygnus atratus*

Appearance: Black plumage and orange bill with a reddish tint
Length (cm): around 110-142
Wingspan(cm): around 160-201
Weight(kg): between 3.7-9
Life Span: 12-40 years
Native: Southern Australia

Overview

Swans are large waterfowl known for their elegance, graceful movements, and striking appearance. With long, S-shaped necks and large bodies, they have captivated the human imagination for centuries, often symbolizing love, beauty, and fidelity. Swans can be seen in both white and black plumage, depending on the species. There are several species of swans, each with unique characteristics and habitats.

Habitat

Swans typically inhabit lowland freshwater wetlands, including marshes, lagoons, lakes, ponds, and slow-moving rivers. They are often found in man-made bodies of water like reservoirs. Some species, such as the Mute Swan, are also comfortable in brackish or saltwater environments. Swans are distributed across the globe, with Northern Hemisphere species like the Mute, Trumpeter, and Whooper Swans, while species such as the Black Swan and Coscoroba Swan are native to the Southern Hemisphere, particularly Australia and South America.

Migration

Swans are migratory birds, traveling long distances during the winter months (September to October). They typically fly in flocks of 20 to 30, sometimes more, and form a V-shaped formation, with the leader at the front. When the leader gets tired, another swan takes its place. This formation helps with communication and efficiency during migration. Unlike geese, who tend to follow coastlines and stop at various points along their route, swans prefer to fly straight to their destination unless forced to stop by weather.

Endangered Status

Swans are not considered endangered. All swan species are classified as “Least Concern” by the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), indicating stable or increasing populations.

Diet

Swans are mostly herbivores, feeding on aquatic vegetation like pondweeds, algae, and widgeon grass. They may occasionally consume small insects or tadpoles. Their serrated bills are designed for grasping plants, and they can sometimes catch small fish, mollusks, or worms.

Behavior

Swans are known for their strong family bonds. They mate for life, and males play an active role in nest building and incubation. They also perform elaborate courtship dances as part of their mating ritual. Swans typically lay between 3 and 8 eggs per breeding season. Due to their strong protective instincts, they are very territorial, especially during the breeding season.

Fun Fact

While swans from the Northern Hemisphere are typically all white, species from the Southern Hemisphere, like the Black Swan, have black feathers with white markings. Swans have also been introduced to North America, particularly Mute Swans, which were brought in the late 1800s and early 1900s for ornamental purposes in parks and ponds. Some of these swans escaped and established the wild populations we have today.

Motifs

Often symbolize love or fidelity because of long lasting relationship.

Leda and the Swan in Painting

by Ella Newell

Le Cygne has been inspiring artists and writers for centuries, with each generation and movement creating their own rendition of the symbolic bird. Within the western art world, the scenes and iconography inspired by the story of Leda and the Swan, a story in Ovid's Metamorphoses, have been reimagined over and over again, becoming almost a thematic right of passage for an artist's portfolio. The story is that of Leda, a spartan queen, who was raped (or seduced) by Zeus in the form of a swan. Countless paintings, sculptures, etchings, and more have been inspired by the story. It became an icon of classicism during the Renaissance, becoming more important for the educated class than it had been for the society in which the myth originated.

The Italian Renaissance saw tons of renditions of Leda and the Swan, with each school of painting copying each other and using the composition and subject matter to hone their skills. Some famous explorations of the story are Raphael's Leda and the Swan (right) and Leonardo da Vinci's Leda and the Swan (below), both of which were influenced the painters across Europe. The story was used by painters to explore themes of sexuality and the female form in a context that was considered acceptable, since it was classical subject matter. However, it also dealt with the complicated theme of rape, allowing for many artists to interpret the story and compositions in different lights.

DaVinci's prepatory sketch for an unfinished Leda and the Swan painting.
Leonardo da Vinci, Leda and the Swan (Sketch), c. 1508-1510, red chalk on paper.
Royal Collection, Windsor Castle. Available online: Royal Collection Trust.

Raphael's version of DaVinci's Leda and the Swan.
Raphael, *Leda and the Swan* (Sketch), c. 1518, black chalk on paper. British Museum, London. Available online: British Museum.

Raphael and DaVinci's composition seen in this copy.
Il Sodoma, c. 1510–1515. Tempera on wood, Galleria Borghese, Rome.

Paul Cézanne. *Leda and the Swan (Léda au cygne)*, c. 1880 (possibly later), Oil on canvas. The Barnes Foundation, BF36.

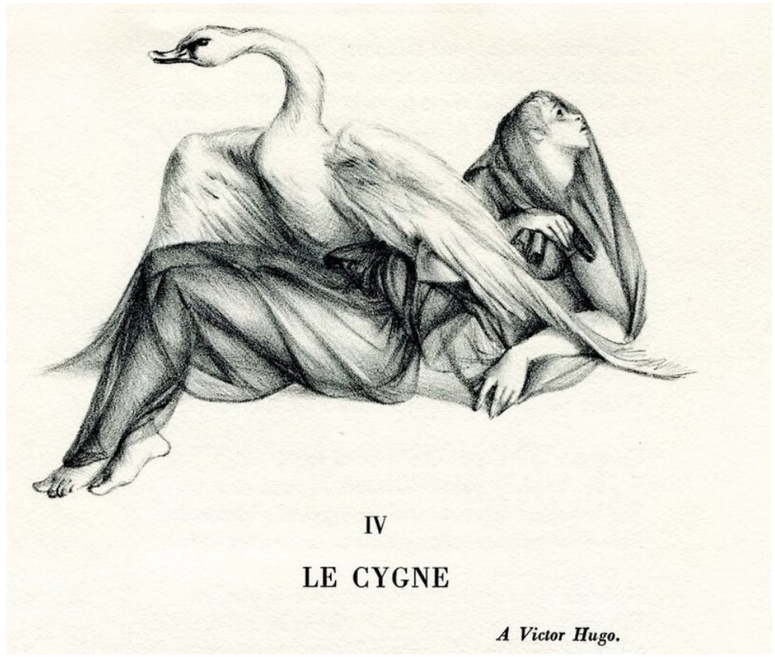
The French painter, Paul Cezanne, completed his version of Leda and the Swan, showing both traditional and new stylizations. His version, seen above, is palpably sexual. Leda gazes directly at the swan with unflinching and seductive eye contact, unlike DaVinci's Leda who is not gazing at the swan that is encircling her. Instead she gazes upon her children at her feet. These renaissance renditions of Leda and the Swan are using the motherly qualities to negate the otherwise sensual nature of the full frontal nudity. However, 300 and some years later, Cezanne does not shy away from painting Leda in a sensual way. This Leda is displaying herself for the viewer, posed more like a reclining Venus painting than a Leda painting. No children are present in this painting – Leda remains "available", remains a young girl. Cezanne even sketched in a champagne flute in her hand in an early preparatory sketch.

While Leda is overtly sexualized in this painting, there is also a layer of awkwardness in the composition. The swan, as in the paintings that came before it, is possessive of Leda. But in this version, instead of an embrace, he is shown more in aggression. Swans are known to be aggressive when need be, and the bite on the hand and wings raised in flight could be read as an attack even though Cezanne softened the motions and painted in a muted, light hearted color palette. In this reading of the painting, Leda's stare becomes more ambiguous. A stare of contempt? A stare of annoyance? A stare of lust, of love?

Because of these ambiguities and stylistic changes from the past, Cezanne's Leda and the Swan is a fascinating contribution to the world's continuous reimagining of the classical myth. Leda's story is one that will never go out of style.

The Swan Stories / *Baudelaire and Victor Hugo*

Extracts chosen by Stephanie Boulard



A drawing of Leda and the Swan preceeding Baudelaire's poem.

Context by Stephanie Boulard

In 1859, the French poet Charles Baudelaire (1821-1867) sent a poem to French writer Victor Hugo (1802-1885) in exile in Guernsey. In his accompanying letter, Baudelaire wrote, "Here are verses made for you and with you in mind," explaining further: "What was important for me was to quickly convey all that an accident or an image can suggest, and how the sight of a suffering animal directs the mind toward all the beings we love [...]" Hugo and Baudelaire were two very different 19th-century poets, embodying seemingly irreconcilable and incompatible ideas of poetry.

Baudelaire dedicated his poem The Swan—whose central motif is exile—to Hugo, weaving in several literary allusions to exile, including Virgil (Aeneas), Ovid, and Dante. In 1862, Victor Hugo published his landmark novel Les Misérables, one of the largest and most significant works of 19th-century literature and the subject of countless adaptations. In one chapter, Hugo responds in a cryptic way, which could be read as ironic, to Baudelaire's The Swan in the episode when bread is given to swans by a bourgeois family in the Luxembourg Gardens.

Le Cygne by Baudelaire In French

À Victor Hugo

I

Andromaque, je pense à vous! Ce petit fleuve,
Pauvre et triste miroir où jadis resplendit
L'immense majesté de vos douleurs de veuve,
Ce Simoïs menteur qui par vos pleurs grandit,

A fécondé soudain ma mémoire fertile,
Comme je traversais le nouveau Carrousel.
Le vieux Paris n'est plus (la forme d'une ville
Change plus vite, hélas! que le coeur d'un mortel);

Je ne vois qu'en esprit tout ce camp de baraques,
Ces tas de chapiteaux ébauchés et de fûts,
Les herbes, les gros blocs verdis par l'eau des flaques,
Et, brillant aux carreaux, le bric-à-brac confus.

Là s'étalait jadis une ménagerie;
Là je vis, un matin, à l'heure où sous les cieux
Froids et clairs le Travail s'éveille, où la voirie
Pousse un sombre ouragan dans l'air silencieux,

Un cygne qui s'était évadé de sa cage,
Et, de ses pieds palmés frottant le pavé sec,
Sur le sol raboteux traînait son blanc plumage.
Près d'un ruisseau sans eau la bête ouvrant le bec

Baignait nerveusement ses ailes dans la poudre,
Et disait, le coeur plein de son beau lac natal:
«Eau, quand donc pleuvras-tu? quand tonneras-tu, foudre?»
Je vois ce malheureux, mythe étrange et fatal,

Vers le ciel quelquefois, comme l'homme d'Ovide,
Vers le ciel ironique et cruellement bleu,
Sur son cou convulsif tendant sa tête avide
Comme s'il adressait des reproches à Dieu!

II

Paris change! mais rien dans ma mélancolie
N'a bougé! palais neufs, échafaudages, blocs,
Vieux faubourgs, tout pour moi devient allégorie
Et mes chers souvenirs sont plus lourds que des rocs.

Aussi devant ce Louvre une image m'opprime:
Je pense à mon grand cygne, avec ses gestes fous,

The Swan by Baudelaire In English

To Victor Hugo

I

Andromache, I think of you! — That little stream,
That mirror, poor and sad, which glittered long ago
With the vast majesty of your widow's grieving,
That false Simois swollen by your tears,

Suddenly made fruitful my teeming memory,
As I walked across the new Carrousel.
— Old Paris is no more (the form of a city
Changes more quickly, alas! than the human heart);

I see only in memory that camp of stalls,
Those piles of shafts, of rough hewn cornices, the grass,
The huge stone blocks stained green in puddles of water,
And in the windows shine the jumbled bric-a-brac.

Once a menagerie was set up there;
There, one morning, at the hour when Labor awakens,
Beneath the clear, cold sky when the dismal hubbub
Of street-cleaners and scavengers breaks the silence,

I saw a swan that had escaped from his cage,
That stroked the dry pavement with his webbed feet
And dragged his white plumage over the uneven ground.
Beside a dry gutter the bird opened his beak,

Restlessly bathed his wings in the dust
And cried, homesick for his fair native lake:
"Rain, when will you fall? Thunder, when will you roll?"
I see that hapless bird, that strange and fatal myth,

Toward the sky at times, like the man in Ovid,
Toward the ironic, cruelly blue sky,
Stretch his avid head upon his quivering neck,
As if he were reproaching God!

II

Paris changes! but naught in my melancholy
Has stirred! New palaces, scaffolding, blocks of stone,
Old quarters, all become for me an allegory,
And my dear memories are heavier than rocks.

So, before the Louvre, an image oppresses me:
I think of my great swan with his crazy motions,

Comme les exilés, ridicule et sublime
Et rongé d'un désir sans trêve! et puis à vous,

Andromaque, des bras d'un grand époux tombée,
Vil bétail, sous la main du superbe Pyrrhus,
Auprès d'un tombeau vide en extase courbée
Veuve d'Hector, hélas! et femme d'Hélénus!

Je pense à la négresse, amaigrie et phtisique
Piétinant dans la boue, et cherchant, l'oeil hagard,
Les cocotiers absents de la superbe Afrique
Derrière la muraille immense du brouillard;

À quiconque a perdu ce qui ne se retrouve
Jamais, jamais! à ceux qui s'abreuvent de pleurs
Et tètent la Douleur comme une bonne louve!
Aux maigres orphelins séchant comme des fleurs!

Ainsi dans la forêt où mon esprit s'exile
Un vieux Souvenir sonne à plein souffle du cor!
Je pense aux matelots oubliés dans une île,
Aux captifs, aux vaincus!... à bien d'autres encor!

— Charles Baudelaire, *Les Fleurs du mal (1861)*

Ridiculous, sublime, like a man in exile,
Relentlessly gnawed by longing! and then of you,

Andromache, base chattel, fallen from the embrace
Of a mighty husband into the hands of proud Pyrrhus,
Standing bowed in rapture before an empty tomb,
Widow of Hector, alas! and wife of Helenus!

I think of the negress, wasted and consumptive,
Trudging through muddy streets, seeking with a fixed gaze
The absent coco-palms of splendid Africa
Behind the immense wall of mist;

Of whoever has lost that which is never found
Again! Never! Of those who deeply drink of tears
And suckle Pain as they would suck the good she-wolf!
Of the puny orphans withering like flowers!

Thus in the dim forest to which my soul withdraws,
An ancient memory sounds loud the hunting horn!
I think of the sailors forgotten on some isle,
— Of the captives, of the vanquished!...of many others too!

— Charles Baudelaire
translated by William Aggeler, *The Flowers of Evil (Fresno, CA: Academy Library Guild, 1954)*

Swans 1885 by Berthe Morisot; pastel on paper.

Les Misérables, Tome 5, Livre 1, Chapitre XVI, Comment de frère on devient père

(...)
Toute la nature déjeunait ; la création était à table ; c'était l'heure ; la grande nappe bleue était mise au ciel et la grande nappe verte sur la terre ; le soleil éclairait à giorno. Dieu servait le repas universel. Chaque être avait sa pâture ou sa pâtée. Le ramier trouvait du chènevis, le pinson trouvait du millet, le chardonneret trouvait du mouron, le rouge-gorge trouvait des vers, l'abeille trouvait des fleurs, la mouche trouvait des infusoires, le verdier trouvait des mouches. On se mangeait bien un peu les uns les autres, ce qui est le mystère du mal mêlé au bien ; mais pas une bête n'avait l'estomac vide.

Les deux petits abandonnés étaient parvenus près du grand bassin, et, un peu troublés par toute cette lumière, ils tâchaient de se cacher, instinct du pauvre et du faible devant la magnificence, même impersonnelle ; et ils se tenaient derrière la baraque des cygnes.

Çà et là, par intervalles, quand le vent donnait, on entendait confusément des cris, une rumeur, des espèces de râles tumultueux, qui étaient des fusillades, et des frappements sourds qui étaient des coups de canon. Il y avait de la fumée au-dessus des toits du côté des halles. Une cloche, qui avait l'air d'appeler, sonnait au loin.

Ces enfants ne semblaient pas percevoir ces bruits. Le petit répétait de temps en temps à demi-voix : J'ai faim.

Presque au même instant que les deux enfants, un autre couple s'approchait du grand bassin. C'était un bonhomme de cinquante ans qui menait par la main un bonhomme de six ans. Sans doute le père avec son fils. Le bonhomme de six ans tenait une grosse brioche.

À cette époque, de certaines maisons riveraines, rue Madame et rue d'Enfer, avaient une clef du Luxembourg dont jouissaient les locataires quand les grilles étaient fermées, tolérance supprimée depuis. Ce père et ce fils sortaient sans doute d'une de ces maisons-là.

Les deux petits pauvres regardèrent venir ce « monsieur », et se cachèrent un peu plus.

Celui-ci était un bourgeois. Le même peut-être qu'un jour Marius, à travers sa fièvre d'amour, avait entendu, près de ce même grand bassin, conseillant à son fils « d'éviter les excès ». Il avait l'air affable et altier, et une bouche qui, ne se fermant pas, souriait toujours. Ce sourire mécanique produit par trop de mâchoire et trop peu de peau, montre les dents plutôt que l'âme. L'enfant, avec sa brioche mordue qu'il n'achevait pas, semblait gavé. L'enfant était vêtu en garde national à cause de l'émeute, et le père était resté habillé en bourgeois à cause de la prudence.
Le père et le fils s'étaient arrêtés près du bassin où s'ébattaient les deux cygnes. Ce bourgeois paraissait avoir pour les cygnes une admiration spéciale. Il leur ressemblait en ce sens qu'il marchait comme eux.

Pour l'instant les cygnes nageaient, ce qui est leur talent principal, et ils étaient superbes.

Si les deux petits pauvres eussent écouté et eussent été d'âge à comprendre, ils eussent pu recueillir les paroles d'un homme grave. Le père disait au fils :

— Le sage vit content de peu. Regarde-moi, mon fils. Je n'aime pas le faste. Jamais on ne me voit avec des habits chamarrés d'or et de pierreries ; je laisse ce faux éclat aux âmes mal organisées.

Ici les cris profonds qui venaient du côté des halles éclatèrent avec un redoublement de cloche et de rumeur.

— Qu'est-ce que c'est que cela ? demanda l'enfant.

Le père répondit :

— Ce sont des saturnales.

Tout à coup, il aperçut les deux petits déguenillés, immobiles derrière la maisonnette verte des cygnes.

— Voilà le commencement, dit-il.

Et après un silence il ajouta :

— L'anarchie entre dans ce jardin.

Cependant le fils mordit la brioche, la recracha et brusquement se mit à pleurer.

— Pourquoi pleures-tu ? demanda le père.

— Je n'ai plus faim, dit l'enfant.

Le sourire du père s'accentua.

— On n'a pas besoin de faim pour manger un gâteau.

— Mon gâteau m'ennuie. Il est rassis.

— Tu n'en veux plus ?

— Non.

Le père lui montra les cygnes.

— Jette-le à ces palmipèdes.

L'enfant hésita. On ne veut plus de son gâteau ; ce n'est pas une raison pour le donner.

Le père poursuivit :

— Sois humain. Il faut avoir pitié des animaux.

Et, prenant à son fils le gâteau, il le jeta dans le bassin.

Le gâteau tomba assez près du bord.

Les cygnes étaient loin, au centre du bassin, et occupés à quelque proie. Ils n'avaient vu ni le bourgeois ni la brioche.

Le bourgeois sentant que le gâteau risquait de se perdre, et ému de ce naufrage inutile, se livra à une agitation télégraphique qui finit par attirer l'attention des cygnes.

Ils aperçurent quelque chose qui surnageait, virèrent de bord comme des navires qu'ils sont, et se dirigèrent vers la brioche lentement, avec la majesté béate qui convient à des bêtes blanches.

— Les cygnes comprennent les signes, dit le bourgeois, heureux d'avoir de l'esprit.

En ce moment le tumulte lointain de la ville eut encore un grossissement subit. Cette fois, ce fut sinistre. Il y a des bouffées de vent qui parlent plus distinctement que d'autres. Celle qui soufflait en cet instant-là apporta nettement des roulements de tambour, des clameurs, des feux de peloton, et les répliques lugubres du tocsin et du canon. Ceci coïncida avec un nuage noir qui cacha brusquement le soleil. Les cygnes n'étaient pas encore arrivés à la brioche.

— Rentrons, dit le père, on attaque les Tuileries.

Il ressaisit la main de son fils. Puis il continua :

— Des Tuileries au Luxembourg, il n'y a que la distance qui sépare la royauté de la pairie ; ce n'est pas loin. Les coups de fusil vont pleuvoir.

Il regarda le nuage.

— Et peut-être aussi la pluie elle-même va pleuvoir ; le ciel s'en mêle ; la branche cadette est condamnée. Rentrons vite.

— Je voudrais voir les cygnes manger la brioche, dit l'enfant.

Le père répondit :

— Ce serait une imprudence.

Et il emmena son petit bourgeois.

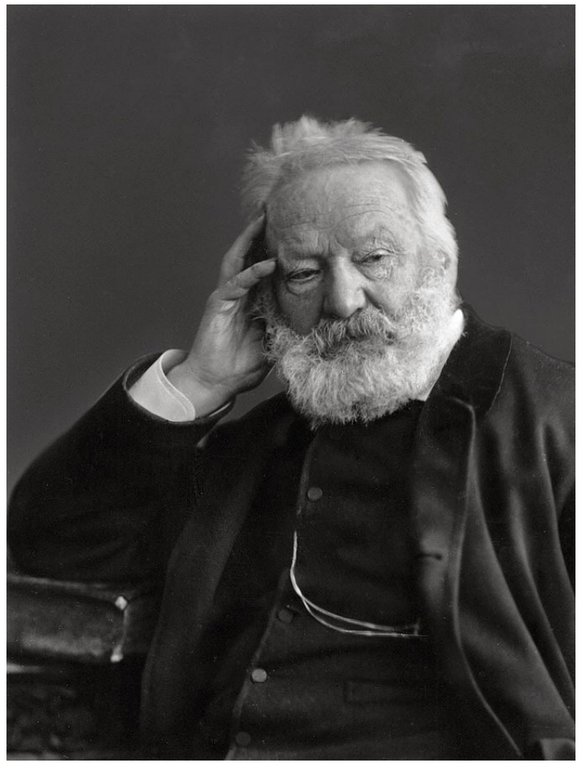
Le fils, regrettant les cygnes, tourna la tête vers le bassin jusqu'à ce qu'un coude des quinconces le lui eût caché.

Cependant, en même temps que les cygnes, les deux petits errants s'étaient approchés de la brioche. Elle flottait sur l'eau. Le plus petit regardait le gâteau, le plus grand regardait le bourgeois qui s'en allait.

Le père et le fils entrèrent dans le labyrinthe d'allées qui mène au grand escalier du massif d'arbres du côté de la rue Madame.

Dès qu'ils ne furent plus en vue, l'aîné se coucha vivement à plat ventre sur le rebord arrondi du bassin, et, s'y cramponnant de la main gauche, penché sur l'eau, presque prêt à y tomber, étendit avec sa main droite sa baguette vers le gâteau. Les cygnes, voyant l'ennemi, se hâtèrent et en se hâtant firent un effet de poitrail utile au petit pêcheur ; l'eau devant les cygnes reflua, et l'une de ces molles ondulations concentriques poussa doucement la brioche vers la baguette de l'enfant. Comme les cygnes arrivaient, la baguette toucha le gâteau. L'enfant donna un coup vif, ramena la brioche, effraya les cygnes, saisit le gâteau, et se redressa. Le gâteau était mouillé ; mais ils avaient faim et soif. L'aîné fit deux parts de la brioche, une grosse et une petite, prit la petite pour lui, donna la grosse à son petit frère, et lui dit :

— Colle-toi ça dans le fusil.



'"Victor Hugo"', photo by Félix Nadar (Gaspard-Félix Tournachou). Source: http://concise.britannica.com/ebc/art-11798/Victor-Hugo-photograph-by-Nadar

“How from a Brother One Becomes a Father”, Chapter XVI, Les Miserables by Victor Hugo

(...)

All nature was breakfasting; creation was at table; this was its hour; the great blue cloth was spread in the sky, and the great green cloth on earth; the sun lighted it all up brilliantly. God was serving the universal repast. Each creature had his pasture or his mess. The ring-dove found his hemp-seed, the chaffinch found his millet, the goldfinch found chickweed, the red-breast found worms, the green finch found flies, the fly found infusoriæ, the bee found flowers. They ate each other somewhat, it is true, which is the misery of evil mixed with good; but not a beast of them all had an empty stomach.

The two little abandoned creatures had arrived in the vicinity of the grand fountain, and, rather bewildered by all this light, they tried to hide themselves, the instinct of the poor and the weak in the presence of even impersonal magnificence; and they kept behind the swans’ hutch.

Here and there, at intervals, when the wind blew, shouts, clamor, a sort of tumultuous death rattle, which was the firing, and dull blows, which were discharges of cannon, struck the ear confusedly. Smoke hung over the roofs in the direction of the Halles. A bell, which had the air of an appeal, was ringing in the distance.

These children did not appear to notice these noises. The little one repeated from time to time: “I am hungry.”

Almost at the same instant with the children, another couple approached the great basin. They consisted of a goodman, about fifty years of age, who was leading by the hand a little fellow of six. No doubt, a father and his son. The little man of six had a big brioche.

At that epoch, certain houses abutting on the river, in the Rues Madame and d’Enfer, had keys to the Luxembourg garden, of which the lodgers enjoyed the use when the gates were shut, a privilege which was suppressed later on. This father and son came from one of these houses, no doubt.

The two poor little creatures watched “that gentleman” approaching, and hid themselves a little more thoroughly.

He was a bourgeois. The same person, perhaps, whom Marius had one day heard, through his love fever, near the same grand basin, counselling his son “to avoid excesses.” He had an affable and haughty air, and a mouth which was always smiling, since it did not shut. This mechanical smile, produced by too much jaw and too little skin, shows the teeth rather than the soul. The child, with his brioche, which he had bitten into but had not finished eating, seemed satiated. The child was dressed as a National Guardsman, owing to the insurrection, and the father had remained clad as a bourgeois out of prudence.

Father and son halted near the fountain where two swans were sporting. This bourgeois appeared to cherish a special admiration for the swans. He resembled them in this sense, that he walked like them.

For the moment, the swans were swimming, which is their principal talent, and they were superb.

If the two poor little beings had listened and if they had been of an age to understand, they might have gathered the words of this grave man. The father was saying to his son:

“The sage lives content with little. Look at me, my son. I do not love pomp. I am never seen in clothes decked with gold lace and stones; I leave that false splendor to badly organized souls.”

Here the deep shouts which proceeded from the direction of the Halles burst out with fresh force of bell and uproar.

“What is that?” inquired the child.

The father replied:

“It is the Saturnalia.”

All at once, he caught sight of the two little ragged boys behind the green swan-hutch.

“There is the beginning,” said he.

And, after a pause, he added:

“Anarchy is entering this garden.

In the meanwhile, his son took a bite of his brioche, spit it out, and, suddenly burst out crying.

“What are you crying about?” demanded his father.

“I am not hungry any more,” said the child.

The father’s smile became more accentuated.

“One does not need to be hungry in order to eat a cake.”

“My cake tires me. It is stale.”

“Don’t you want any more of it?”

“No.”

The father pointed to the swans.

“Throw it to those palmipeds.”

The child hesitated. A person may not want any more of his cake; but that is no reason for giving it away.

The father went on:

“Be humane. You must have compassion on animals.”

And, taking the cake from his son, he flung it into the basin.

The cake fell very near the edge.

The swans were far away, in the centre of the basin, and busy with some prey. They had seen neither the bourgeois nor the brioche.

The bourgeois, feeling that the cake was in danger of being wasted, and moved by this useless shipwreck, entered upon a telegraphic agitation, which finally attracted the attention of the swans.

They perceived something floating, steered for the edge like ships, as they are, and slowly directed their course toward the brioche, with the stupid majesty which befits white creatures.

“The swans [cygnes] understand signs [signes],” said the bourgeois, delighted to make a jest.

At that moment, the distant tumult of the city underwent another sudden increase. This time it was sinister. There are some gusts of wind which speak more distinctly than others. The one which was blowing at that moment brought clearly defined drum-beats, clamors, platoon firing, and the dismal replies of the tocsin and the cannon. This coincided with a black cloud which suddenly veiled the sun.

The swans had not yet reached the brioche.

“Let us return home,” said the father, “they are attacking the Tuileries.”

He grasped his son’s hand again. Then he continued:

“From the Tuileries to the Luxembourg, there is but the distance which separates Royalty from the peerage; that is not far. Shots will soon rain down.”

He glanced at the cloud.

“Perhaps it is rain itself that is about to shower down; the sky is joining in; the younger branch is condemned. Let us return home quickly.”

“I should like to see the swans eat the brioche,” said the child.

The father replied:

“That would be imprudent.”

And he led his little bourgeois away.

The son, regretting the swans, turned his head back toward the basin until a corner of the quincunxes concealed it from him.

In the meanwhile, the two little waifs had approached the brioche at the same time as the swans. It was floating on the water. The smaller of them stared at the cake, the elder gazed after the retreating bourgeois.

Father and son entered the labyrinth of walks which leads to the grand flight of steps near the clump of trees on the side of the Rue Madame.

As soon as they had disappeared from view, the elder child hastily flung himself flat on his stomach on the rounding curb of the basin, and clinging to it with his left hand, and

leaning over the water, on the verge of falling in, he stretched out his right hand with his stick towards the cake. The swans, perceiving the enemy, made haste, and in so doing, they produced an effect of their breasts which was of service to the little fisher; the water flowed back before the swans, and one of these gentle concentric undulations softly floated the brioche towards the child's wand. Just as the swans came up, the stick touched the cake. The child gave it a brisk rap, drew in the brioche, frightened away the swans, seized the cake, and sprang to his feet. The cake was wet; but they were hungry and thirsty. The elder broke the cake into two portions, a large one and a small one, took the small one for himself, gave the large one to his brother, and said to him:

"Ram that into your muzzle."

Translated by Isabel F. Hapgood, Thomas Y. Crowell & Co. No. 13, Astor Place
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An illustration of the boys chasing after the brioche.
Francisque Poulbot, Les Misérables, Carte Postale/Poscard, 1920.

The Swan Stories / *A Commentary*

by Sukhada Moogi

The Swan (Le Cygne); To Victor Hugo by Charles Baudelaire is a poem that dwells in themes of loss, memory, alienation, and exile. Baudelaire crafts a poignant exploration of human suffering and alienation amidst modernity.

In the first section, Baudelaire anchors the poem in the image of a swan, escaped and wandering in the modernizing Paris. The swan is a symbol of yearning, mirroring the condition of individuals in Paris's modernization. The displaced creature's plight echoes through the city, mirroring Baudelaire's lament for "old Paris" that has been altered by urbanization. With Andromache, widow of Hector from the Trojan War, who embodies grief and loss, Baudelaire connects the swan's dislocation to a timeless and universal sense of loss. The changing architecture of Paris stands as a stark metaphor for the relentless march of time, indifferent to personal and historical memory.

The second section emphasizes the focus to encompass a collective sense of grief and suffering. Andromache reappears as a gateway to other figures burdened by despair. All figures represent facets of human anguish, creating a mosaic of interconnected sorrows. Through this tapestry, Baudelaire universalizes the swan's plight and explores that displacement and longing are intrinsic to the human condition. The poem thus transcends its specific images, weaving historical and contemporary elements into an intricate allegory of loss.

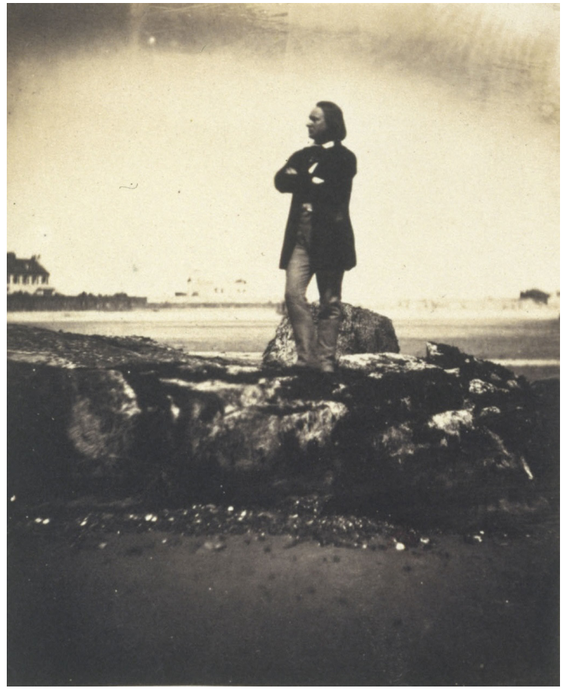
Baudelaire's use of allegory and metaphor is central to the poem's resonance. The swan is not just a bird but a symbol for all those who are out of place, time, or caught in the turbulence of modernity. The changing landscape mirrors the emotional dislocation, illustrating how physical and psychological places are intertwined. In dedicating this poem to Victor Hugo, Baudelaire acknowledges the tension between old and new literary traditions, suggesting that modern suffering needs a fresh poetic language.

This passage from Les Misérables offers an insightful outlook on the social dynamics of Paris and reflects the tensions between different classes in the city. The bourgeois father and son represent the upper class, and the poor children represent the lower class. In this scene, Hugo explores themes of charity and social inequality. The bourgeois father and son are portrayed as comical and detached. The father's "mechanical smile" and hollow advice about living simply contrast with their wealth and privilege, highlighting his lack of genuine warmth. His claim to dislike "false splendor" is ironic, as he only seeks to maintain a facade of modesty. The father's admiration for the swans reflects his class's disconnection from reality. He sees them as graceful ornaments rather than recognizing their deeper symbolic meaning, viewing them with detached curiosity instead of true affection. The two poor children, ragged and hungry, symbolize the lower class, focused on survival rather than ideals. The elder child's desperate attempt to claim the discarded brioche highlights the stark economic disparity. In contrast, the bourgeois father's act of throwing the brioche to the swans is a superficial gesture of charity, lacking true understanding or sacrifice. The poor children take it out of necessity, not for moral display.

The passage is rich in irony: the bourgeois father's superficial gestures of virtue, like tossing the brioche to the swans, contrast with the real suffering of the poor. His mechanical smile reflects his detachment from poverty, while the poor children's struggle for survival shows resilience. Set in the Luxembourg Gardens, the scene also mirrors the socio-political tensions in the novel, with the father's attempt to impart lessons on modesty juxtaposed against the looming revolution, symbolizing the bourgeoisie's ignorance of the world beyond their privileged lives. The swans serve as a symbolic backdrop, representing the bourgeoisie's detachment. Initially graceful and captivating to the father, they are oblivious to the human drama around them. Their indifference to the brioche contrasts with the poor children's desperate need for food. The swans' slow, majestic movements symbolize the bourgeois attitude toward social issues—detached, slow-moving, and unaware of the urgency of the situation.

The Ironic Response

Baudelaire's Le Cygne centers on the poet's deep sense of alienation, symbolized through the image of a disoriented swan lost in a city that has become foreign to it. For Baudelaire, the swan embodies a poignant sense of loss, confusion, and the impossibility of reclaiming a better past. His poem focuses on the existential crisis of the individual, overwhelmed by the changes of modernity and the loss of meaning in the world.



Hugo on isolation rock.

Hugo, however, in his social critique in Les Misérables, might be seen as responding to Baudelaire's representation of alienation by using a similar symbol—the swan—but placing it within a broader, more societal context. In the Luxembourg Gardens scene in Les Misérables, Hugo uses the swans to represent the indifference of the bourgeoisie. The bourgeois father's admiration for the swans—treating them as mere ornaments—speaks to the superficiality of the upper class, who, like the swans, float above the suffering of others. The swans here are not so much alienated but rather detached, embodying the bourgeois attitude of being oblivious or indifferent to the struggles of the poor.

Swan Symbolism in Both

Baudelaire's Le Cygne is deeply personal and introspective, reflecting his own alienation and the disconnection he feels in a modern, industrialized world. The swan in Baudelaire's poem is a tragic figure, symbolizing the poet's sense of displacement and the collapse of older, more meaningful ways of life.

In contrast, Hugo's swan serves as a tool for social critique. The swans in Les Misérables are not figures of existential crisis, but symbols of social detachment and ignorance. The bourgeois father and son admire the swans without understanding their deeper symbolic meaning, mirroring how the bourgeoisie view beauty and grace without any real connection to the struggles of the lower classes. For Hugo, the swans' indifference to the poor children's hunger becomes a reflection of the broader social divide: the rich live in a world of abstraction, unaffected by the harsh realities of poverty.

Baudelaire's Response with Le Gâteau

Baudelaire's response with the prose poem Le Gâteau reflects his characteristic cynicism and sharp critique, especially in relation to the bourgeoisie and their superficial gestures of charity or virtue. In this piece, Baudelaire uses irony and dark humor to comment on the hollowness of the bourgeois's self-image and moral posturing, offering a stark contrast to Hugo's portrayal of the bourgeoisie in Les Misérables. In Le Gâteau, Baudelaire uses the simple, mundane act of a cake being discarded to criticize the social and moral attitudes of the upper class. This act serves as a metaphor for the disconnected charity and the misguided, often hollow, actions of the privileged class—similar to how in Hugo's Les Misérables, the bourgeois father throws the brioche into the water as a gesture of generosity, which is ultimately ignored by the swans. Baudelaire's prose poem deepens the critique by emphasizing the superficiality of such gestures, mocking how the upper class is quick to feign nobility or generosity while remaining utterly out of touch with real suffering. Both Baudelaire and Hugo use food—Baudelaire with the metaphor of the cake and Hugo with the brioche—as symbols of the disconnect between the classes. In both texts, the act of throwing the food away is symbolic of the bourgeois's failure to understand the needs of the lower classes. However, Baudelaire's Le Gâteau is even more biting in its critique. While Hugo's portrayal of the bourgeois father is comical, suggesting ignorance rather than malice, Baudelaire's cynicism is sharper. He suggests that the bourgeoisie's charity is not just ineffective but inherently false and self-serving, a mere display of virtue rather than a true act of compassion. Thus, Baudelaire's Le Gâteau can be seen as a pointed, ironic response to the kind of empty charity that Hugo critiques in Les Misérables, taking the theme of social detachment and elevating it with a layer of biting, cynical humor.

Bird Games

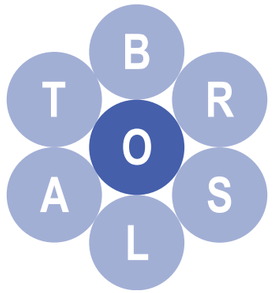
by Ella Newell

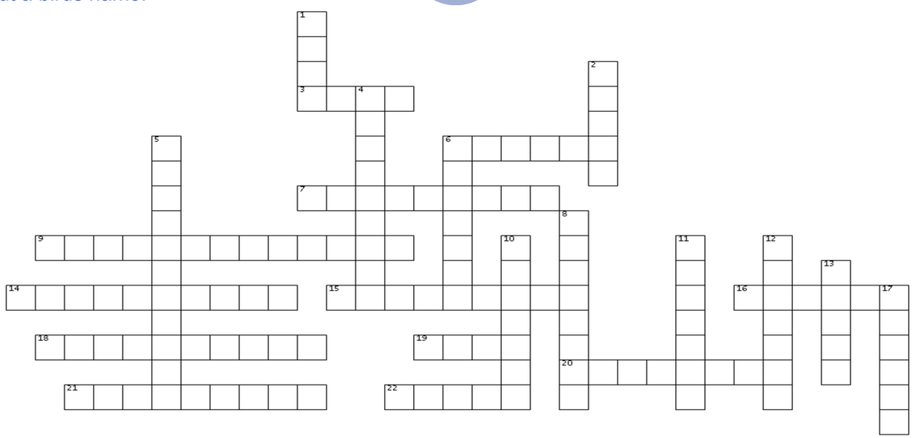
Answers to all games located on the back of the next page!

Bird Search

Find as many words as possible using any combination of the letters shown, as long as the middle letter is included. You can use letters multiple times!

Find the combination of all the letters that spells out a birds name.





ACROSS

3. Used as mail in this fictional series that took place in the UK
6. A bird whose name rhymes with lover.
7. USAUSAUSA.
9. A bird that went extinct in the 1910s, alarming many to the effects humans had on nature.
14. Mythological creature with wings of an eagle.
15. A Beatles song.
16. Known for mimicry.
18. A fictional bird in a popular dystopian series starring Woody Harrelson.
19. Goes QUACK.
20. A bird oftentimes pictured on a snowy branch.
21. The bird namesake of Donna Tartt's 2013 novel.
22. A word describing birds or planes.

DOWN

1. Bird that is famously extinct.
2. Often depicted delivering babies.
4. The bird often attributed to Athena or Minerva.
5. Tiny nectar-eater.
6. Bird known for putting on a show with its elegant tail feathers.
8. Bird native to north america know for is signature "peent"
10. Why did the _____ cross the road?
11. A Tuxedo-like flightless bird.
12. Thieves of beach-side picnics.
13. A bird part of the Furious Five in Kung Fu Panda.
17. A festive november bird.

Swan Meme

by Karen Zheng

Bird Games / *The Answers*

by Ella Newell

Bird Search

The Bird: ***Albatross***

Plenty of words can be found, some of which are the following:

Lobs	Bolts	Ablastor
Slot	Boats	Broasts
Loss	Boast	Borstals
Lost	Boars	Sortals
Oats	Solar	Aboral
Oral	Sorts	Aortas
Taro	Roast	Assort
Sobs	Roasts	Bloats
Soba	Rotas	Alto
Toss	Orals	Labors
Boat	Lasso	
Oars	Labor	

Crossword

ACROSS

3. Owls
6. Plover
7. BaldEagle
9. Carrier Pigeon
14. Hippogriff
15. Blackbird
16. Parrot
18. Mockingjay
19. Duck
20. Cardinal
21. Goldfinch
22. Avian

DOWN

1. Dodo
2. Stork
4. LittleOwl
5. Hummingbird
6. Peacock
8. Woodcock
10. Chicken
11. Penguin
12. Seagulls
13. Crane
17. Turkey

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Bird of the Month by Karen Zheng

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https://www.pexels.com/photo/black-swan-on-water-9171196/ (Black Swan)

https://www.pexels.com/photo/two-swans-on-water-14325919/ (Black Swan with mute swan)

Leda and the Swan in Painting by Ella Newell

Il Sodoma, c. 1510–1515. Tempera on wood, Galleria Borghese, Rome.

Leonardo da Vinci, Leda and the Swan (Sketch), c. 1508-1510, red chalk on paper. Royal Collection, Windsor Castle. Available online: Royal Collection Trust .

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Francisque Poulbot, Les Misérables, Carte Postale/Poscard, 1920.
‘”Victor Hugo”’, photo by Félix Nadar (Gaspard-Félix Tournachou). Source: http://concise.britannica.com/ebc/art-11798/Victor-Hugo-photograph-by-Nadar