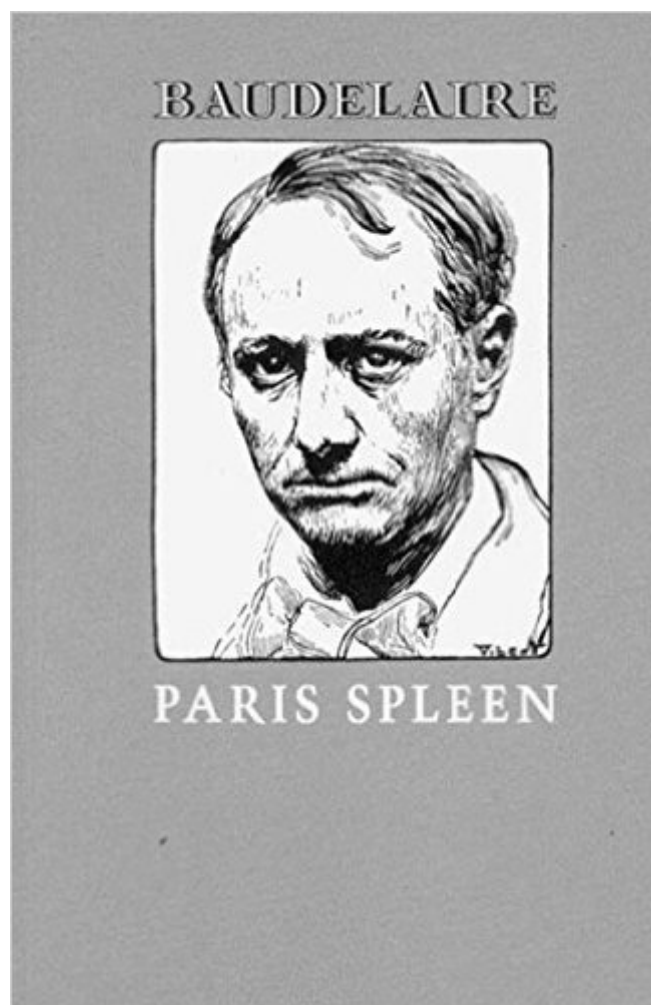


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Paris Spleen (New Directions Paperbook)



Synopsis

One of the founding texts of literary modernism. Set in a modern, urban Paris, the prose pieces in this volume constitute a further exploration of the terrain Baudelaire had covered in his verse masterpiece, *The Flowers of Evil*: the city and its squalor and inequalities, the pressures of time and mortality, and the liberation provided by the sensual delights of intoxication, art, and women. Published posthumously in 1869, *Paris Spleen* was a landmark publication in the development of the genre of prose poetry—a format which Baudelaire saw as particularly suited for expressing the feelings of uncertainty, flux, and freedom of his age—and one of the founding texts of literary modernism.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Charles Baudelaire's 'Paris Spleen' (1869) is a wonderfully original work, one happily outside the framework of American literature and its broad range of sensibilities. Most notably, these 51 short prose poems illustrate how truth, and the most accurate perceptions of life possible, can be reached by honing the senses and then melding them with the more passive facilities of the mind; logic and rational thinking, as demonstrated here, are for the vulgar, those in denial, those simply unable to accept the very rich, self-evident smorgasbord of life. Baudelaire, both a tragic and a comedic clown, also effortlessly illustrates how melancholy and joy are by no means mutually exclusive categories of human experience. Set largely against autumnal landscapes, the wandering poet indulges in "the mysterious and aristocratic pleasure of watching" whenever he is not a direct participant in the events these visionary pieces describe. Solitary, "fluent in outrage," cranky, lovelorn, misanthropic,

and pedagogical by turns, these pieces find the poet stalking bereaved widows, peering unseen through the candle-lit windows of neighbor's homes, asking philosophical questions of "enigmatical" strangers, shunning crowds, greeting the twilight with a bow, reading the time of day in a cat's eyes, "beating the poor," and listening, eavesdropping, and relentlessly observing wherever he goes. Not surprisingly, the poet's vision of urban Paris lies somewhere between the canvases of Degas and Toulouse-Lautrec: garishly colored, grotesque, heavily populated with heaving women and friable grande dames, Baudelaire's city is a stage for life's pantomime, open to and allowing for all combinations and possibilities.

I've found this big small book of prose poetry to be a gem amongst Baudelaire's work, a book which activated in me a mindful contemplative approach to poetry yielded and made possible by the one and only daring one, dear Charles Baudelaire. Attaining such potentiality that I literally carried this book of poetics around with me for about a quarter of a year -- taking small bites of daily prose so I could explore as a kind of daily meditation. I can report with clear recollection a uniquely powerful artistic maneuvering made possible by times remarkably clear and vital forces like a Baudelaire pens for us potentiality he dares of us to reach with might a knowing of language anew that seemingly was dear Baudelaire's pinnacle yield of explorative poetics baring both a far reaching scope as well as a breathless immediacy we meet with an excited readiness we seem to have saved up for Baudelaire himself. I can only hope you meet his searing adeptness of a spinning language all his own that we are enthralled to experience -- providing a kind of rapture that beautifully original power makes the very passing of time speed up in an attempt to try to catch up with such fresh gestures one can only pen after a life committed to a natural fusion of our deeply individual place of oneness and of being we creatives can dare to bare a responsibility there of. Dear Baudelaire provides us here in PARIS SPLEEN a striking set of poetics that bares a relevance today as vivid modernism we seem to need to remember in an era of expansive and unyielding equality that we find ourselves amidst this contemporary era -- Baudelaire's seemingly historic recollecting of singular modernism that gives us a clarity of understanding just how indeed we have found ourselves amidst our current era.

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