

Paris Spleen, 1869 Study Guide

Paris Spleen, 1869 by Charles Baudelaire

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Section 1: Introduction, To Arsene Houssaye & The Foreigner

Section 1: Introduction, To Arsene Houssaye & The Foreigner Summary

The Introduction of this collection of works, an essay by Raymond N. MacKenzie, gives a brief history of the author's past achievements with the works found in "The Flowers of Evil" and how this better-known work provides readers with a skewed sample of the author's abilities. "To Arsene Houssaye" is Baudelaire's letter to his editor, laying out his original intent of following the basis used by Aloyius Bertrand in "Gaspard of the Night", a collection of prose poems that romanticized the dark ages. "The Foreigner" is written as if this were an excerpt between two people in which one questions the other on what he loves, and as the first asks the questions, the second answers that the options that are laid before him are not of any importance to him. When finally asked directly, the man answers that he loves the clouds.

Section 1: Introduction, To Arsene Houssaye & The Foreigner Analysis

The Introduction of this collection provides the reader with glimpse into the social environment that existed for Charles Baudelaire in the 1800s that shaped the times and works that are found in this collection of fifty poems. By giving the reader the background of the environment of the author, the events of the times, and the resulting changes, the reader has the opportunity to more clearly identify with the significance of the this work in the time that it was originally published. "To Arsene Houssaye" is Baudelaire's letter to his editor depicting the following group of poems in a contradictory fashion that both brags of accomplishment while simultaneously deprecating his work in an essence that the goal that he had set out before him was not accomplished. This also brings in the aspect that if one accomplishes something as generously fulfilling, can one live up to the new standard of which they have set for themselves? Baudelaire states that this collection has no head, no tail, but is full of heads and tails that can be cut up and continue on, much like the serpent eating its tail from mythology. That was originally his purpose. "Who among us has not dreamed, in his ambitious days, of the miracle of a poetic prose, musical without rhythm or rhyme," he writes, and yet in his own way, Baudelaire has set the poems up with a tempo that may not rhyme but does set a rhythm so this is again a contradiction in both accomplishment and yet a failure of his stated intention. "The Foreigner" is written as if it were taken from out of a conversation between two men having a discussion on what they love, and the Foreigner in the situation seems to have no love for things of tangible nature, but he loves the clouds, insinuating that the Foreigner loves nature, or at least not the things that are created by man but that insight creativity instead.



Section 2: The Old Woman's Despair, The Artist's Confiteor, A Joker & The Double Room

Section 2: The Old Woman's Despair, The Artist's Confiteor, A Joker & The Double Room Summary

"The Old Woman's Despair" is a description of a fragile, elderly woman who is visiting a newborn child that she wishes to bring joy to. When the child cries at the old woman's touch, she is heartbroken by the rejection and returns to her solitude. In "The Artist's Confiteor", an artist is so drawn to the autumn that nature has laid before him that he praises the very essence of it and tries to convey his love for what he sees. In the artist's process of attempting to emulate and capture some of the beauty that he finds, he realizes that nature has painted such a vivid creation that whatever work he tries to produce will be a weak replica. The artist's knowledge turns his love into despair and then defeat, because nature has outdone him even before he tried.

In "A Joker", on New Years, a donkey is trotting through the city with the aristocracy traveling the streets among the working class. A posh man stops to bid the donkey "Health and Happiness" in the New Year and then turns to his companions to either admire the joke or to join in. The donkey pays no mind to the gentleman, but the narrator thinks to himself that if this is what the aristocracy has to offer, then the country's social demeanor is at a loss.

In "The Double Room", the narrator finds himself in a room and comments on the room's colors, muted patterns, lack of artwork, and humidity. Sitting on the bed is a beautiful woman, who the narrator refers to as the Idol, the queen of dreams that he finds both beautiful and torturous. A knock sounds at the door, bringing back the time that the narrator has lost while in the dream, and with that, the reality of his surroundings return as well. He finds his dusty room, the smell of tobacco, and reality of his chambers awaiting him, including a calendar marked with publishing deadlines, stained windows, and watermarks, and he realizes that he must return to work.

Section 2: The Old Woman's Despair, The Artist's Confiteor, A Joker & The Double Room Analysis

"The Old Woman's Despair" depicts the old woman's joy at being able to see the new child and share in the joy of his birth that is shattered as the child becomes frightened at the sight of her. Her weeping at the rejection implies that she may no longer try to share in the life that surrounds her, as the child was described similar to her in that they both had no teeth or hair, and therefore it was her age that made her horrible to the young



boy. The emotion is one that the reader can relate to, as the empathy for the elderly and the knowledge that we will all grow old is one shared by all. However, there is also the thought that just like the old woman, the child too may have noticed the similarities, and in doing so is faced with the realization that he will end up one day, just as he had started in this world, hairless and toothless.

"The Artist's Confiteor" shows an artist speaking of the beauty that surrounds him. The colors and vibrancy that come to his mind's eye is one that both inspires him and drives him to a point where once he realizes that any work of art he may produce from its benefit will only be a pale comparison to the work of art created by nature. He loathes nature for the beauty that it has created and because he will never be able to replicate that beauty. So in turn, he hates the very thing that he loved so much, that thing that drew him to create now mocks his attempt at creation. In this, as in "To Arsene Houssaye", Baudelaire demonstrates the circular pattern that he had mentioned of the feeling that there is no beginning, or end, neither heads nor tails in the serpent he has created.

In "A Joker", the fine gentleman who had taken the moment to bow and wish the donkey health and happiness, Baudelaire refers to as imbecile and the soul of France, showing an enmity of the social behavior that surrounded him. The New Year can represent an ending, and as with the presence of snow bringing the theme of death, the ridiculous behavior can signify the end of an era that the author sees taking place in the time.

In "The Double Room", the narrator spends great detail on the room itself. The room to which he awoke was colored in blues and pinks, symbolic of male and female colors that are muted and faded to the viewer. The presence of the Idol, the queen of dreams, is one that the narrator shows in duality of being both glorious and treacherous, in that the queen of dreams can both bring dreams and turn them into nightmares. The nightmare comes as a knock on the door that brings the narrator back to the reality of his life and the dust and the work that must be done.



Section 3: To Each His Chimera, The Fool and Venus & The Dog and the Vial

Section 3: To Each His Chimera, The Fool and Venus & The Dog and the Vial Summary

In "To Each his Chimera", the narrator spies a group of men walking along, hunched over and each with the mythical Chimera carried on his back. The narrator asks one of the men where they are going, but the man does not seem to know, just that he needs to walk. As the group slowly passes by, each with their burden weighing their bodies down, the narrator feels a heavy burden and realizes that he feels more burdened than the men whom he had just met carrying their beasts.

In "The Fool and Venus", in a park at sunset, the narrator sees a man dressed as a jester gazing at a statue of Venus. The narrator feels disgust for the man dressed as a fool, but then he finds pity for him as he gazes at Venus in sorrow, knowing he is a fool, while the narrator notes that Venus' gaze stares off into the distance and does not register the man at her feet.

In "The Dog and the Vial", the narrator presents his dog with a vial of fine perfume that he has purchased, but the dog recoils from the scent. The narrator then becomes frustrated with the dog, stating that the dog would have loved a bag of excrement, and compares the dog to the masses of people that can not find the wonder in such a crafted piece, though they would love carefully chosen excrement.

Section 3: To Each His Chimera, The Fool and Venus & The Dog and the Vial Analysis

In "To Each his Chimera", encountering the men who carry the burden of the chimeras on their backs, the narrator tries to gain the understanding as to why these men would be carrying these creatures. The man advising him that they are not sure as to their destination or the reason for their journey is symbolic of Baudelaire's theory that the laboring class do not themselves know why they labor instead of enjoying their lives. However, at the end, in contradiction to this, the narrator states that he feels more burdened than the men that he had met. In "The Fool and Venus", the fool that sits at the feet of the statue of Venus, is regarded as a lowly creature to have been created and comments that even he was created in this world for a purpose. The jester looks to the statue with wanting eyes, and although the man is dressed as a fool, the foolishness that he displays in begging the marble statue for its guidance may have elicited the narrator's further disdain. In "The Dog and the Vial", the comparison of the dog that prefers the smell of excrement to that of the well crafted perfume is that of Baudelaire's

comparison of the masses' preferences to the soulless production of amusements for the poor.



Section 4: The Bad Glazier, At One in the Morning, The Wild Woman and the Little Mistress & Crowds

Section 4: The Bad Glazier, At One in the Morning, The Wild Woman and the Little Mistress & Crowds Summary

In "The Bad Glazier", the narrator describes the mysterious impulses that guide human nature. The narrator covers the idea that there is a type of person that delays a simple action based on the fear of the outcome, then is suddenly driven with an abundance of energy to complete the task. He tells of a friend who set fire to a forest to see if fire would catch as quickly as people say that it does. He also tells of another friend who would light a cigar next to gunpowder to feed the desire of risk. It seems to the narrator that these experiences seem to manifest in daydreamers. The narrator then defers to a theory that demons take people over in order to act out these moments, as the people themselves are unable to explain them. He tells that he wakes up one morning sullen and depressed but driven by a need to create or do something memorable, and in the moment, he opens his window. The first person to come by is a glazier, crying out regarding his wares. The narrator calls him to climb to the seventh floor, and then when he arrives, the narrator berates the glazier for not having something of color that would make his life beautiful. He throws the man out, and then once the man reappears in the street below, he throws a flowerpot on his pack, causing the man to fall over and break all his wares. Though the narrator describes having done something that was worth his soul, he also shows a sense of regret for his actions.

In "At One in the Morning", at the beginning of the morning, the narrator comments that any annoyance that he is caused at this time would be of his own doing. The narrator depicts that he is bored and tired with these accounts of his daily actions. He states "Discontent with everything, discontent with myself, I would really like to redeem myself, to feel a bit of pride in the silence and solitude of the night." He then prays that he is able to produce lines that will accomplish this redemption.

In "The Wild Woman and the Little Mistress", the narrator is exasperated with the sighs of the woman whose company he is keeping. His complaint is that the woman whines as though she was in need, comparing her to a beggar woman searching for crumbs of bread outside a tavern. However, the exasperation he finds in her begging for more loving as if she is in need of devouring it all at once since she is unaware of when she will be given her next meal. He continues on to a warning that if she were to continue to whine over that which she begs for, he will tire of her and throw her out to find a new benefactor to provide to her needs, and she should think of what the new benefactor may be like as they are not all as accommodating as he is.



In "Crowds", the narrator describes that there are people born to the world who can be both solitary in a crowd and surrounded by masses when alone. The fairies supposedly breathed into these people, and this was a gift given at birth. These people are the chosen and are compared to those who travel the world like a priest who is sent to a mission in far off lands or the missionaries that founded colonies. Baudelaire states that this is a gift of a poet, as the poet has the joy of this gift to be one and the all at the same time and enjoys the choice of being any that he chooses to be in the moment.

Section 4: The Bad Glazier, At One in the Morning, The Wild Woman and the Little Mistress & Crowds Analysis

In "The Bad Glazier", Baudelaire blames his urge to mistreat the poor Glazier on a demon that must have planted the seed of the misdeed, when in several other works in the book, Baudelaire takes credit for the misdeed that he has accosted onto others, placing this work aside from the others in this essence, as for this once Baudelaire takes no credit for his abuse, whereas in other works he revels in his abuse. In "At One in the Morning", the quiet of humanity is a comfort to the narrator even as he acknowledges that he, himself, may cause annoyance to himself. Baudelaire shows his self-contempt by recounting the day's events to himself, and the duties are much like that of the laboring class that Baudelaire shows so much disdain for. In doing this he requests the ability to redeem himself by creating lines in the hours of silence, showing that he sees he is on the path that he often condemns others for being on. In "The Wild Woman and the Little Mistress", the continuous sighs of a woman that is well satisfied and the begging for more is comparable to that the greed of the aristocracy of the times, in which the poet finds there is nothing of worth. His comparison of the mistress who is so greedy for his affections to that of the Wild Woman, a popular fair attraction, is so that the reader is forced to see that when one becomes obsessed in their greed, they are willing to take any scrap that they can get, such as the Wild Woman, often depicted as eating raw meat and being locked in cage.



Section 5: The Widows, The Old Mountebank & Cake

Section 5: The Widows, The Old Mountebank & Cake Summary

In "The Widows", the narrator states that public parks are "These shady retreats are the gathering places of those crippled by life" (p. 3). Baudelaire comments that this is a place that attracts the poets to the weakened and ruined forms of life. He comments that the widows are easy to spot, that the poor must stint their grief while the rich wear it in full view of the world. The narrator followed one widow who had caught his attention through her day. He watched her lunch alone, followed her to a book reading and searches the paper for something. He found her fascinating in the way she carried herself and sat quietly to the side in a park to listen to the music that drifted in the wind to the woman. The narrator watched the concert and the hordes of the poor that lined the area to listen to the music that the idle rich only paid to hear so that they could say that they have. The narrator spied a proud woman in among these watchers, standing tall at the gates listening to the music. The narrator again was curious about this woman who was dressed in mourning clothes. As he approached, he noted the reason for her not paying for admittance to the concert was that she was holding the hand of a child, a child that would require the care that the cost of the concert would not afford.

In "The Old Mountebank", it is an unnamed holiday. The narrator revels in the event as the merchants vie for attentions of the people and that the air is full of their cries and shouts. The narrator spies an old mountebank at the outskirts of the huts in a state of poverty worse than that which the narrator is accustomed to seeing. The narrator found a deep sadness to go to him and ask what wares he had to show or what wonders he had created, but did not for fear of embarrassing the man. As the narrator decided to leave the man money for no wares, the crowd swept him away and he no longer saw the man.

In "Cake", the narrator travels to a gloriously described place where he feels at peace with the universe and sees the world that he exists in a memory. The narrator is overjoyed with the chance to see such a place where his heart is lightened by the beauty and the connection that he feels to the world without its sorrows. He sits and takes out a portion of bread and cup for a drink, when a ragged man approaches and eyes the bread. The visitor calls the bread cake and cannot take his eyes off of it. The narrator offers the man the piece of bread and suddenly another man similarly dressed and thin attacks the first over the piece of bread. The two visitors begin a brawl over the piece of bread, and neither being willing to share, they continue their fight until the bread had been taken back and forth so many times that there is no longer any bread but only crumbs. This spectacle spoils the landscape for the narrator.



Section 5: The Widows, The Old Mountebank & Cake Analysis

In "Crowds", the ability to lose oneself in a crowd is similar to the offer that the Satan offered the narrator in "The Temptations: Or, Errors, Plutus, and Fame", in which the narrator feels much like one of the blessed in that he was gifted by the Fey in order to separate and commune with the solitude, like a Lord of Souls, who can live in and amongst the others and live a bit as them. In "The Widows", the fascination of widows to the poet is one where he sees much less humanity in these people that walk away from the living and reside in silence. He comments that they are crippled for life by their grief. However, in his comparing their lack of life, he yet finds them intriguing enough that he follows two of these women, and finds that the strength of will and pride that these women have make them remarkable creatures. In his telling of the proud widow that he spied at a concert, he felt surely she should be inside on a seat, and not in the crowd of the poor and downcast. He finds himself curious as to why she would reject the pleasure of a better seat, as he had not noticed the child whose hand she held.

In "The Old Mountebank", the personal fears of Baudelaire come to the surface in this poem as the narrator tells a tale of seeing a decrepit old Mountebank at a disheveled hut at the edges of the fair, where the man had no wares displayed. The horror of the old man's situation moves the narrator into giving him charity, though he fails to do so out of fear of embarrassing the man. This is one of the only works where Baudelaire empathizes with the poor degenerate character in his work. The narrator supposes that the old man may have been a poet that has been forgotten by the masses, and this reference implies that the reasoning of the empathy that Baudelaire writes is his fears that he may one day wind up much like the old man that he would normally reject.

In "Cake", the narrator first encounters a place where he is finally at the peace he has sought, a peace that makes him feel as though he were one with the universe and that all life surrounds and encompasses him. A little man who echoes throughout Baudelaire's poems disturbs his reverie for this place. The narrator offers the man a piece of bread that the man calls cake. In his description, the little man is referred to as a savage, which is visualized in the fight that ensues over the piece of bread, but is more subtly re-enforced by the fact that the man calls the bread cake, which to one who never has had bread, would it be such a treat as cake is to the poor that are described through this collection of works?



Section 6: The Clock, A Hemisphere in Her Hair, Invitation to the Voyage & The Toy of the Poor

Section 6: The Clock, A Hemisphere in Her Hair, Invitation to the Voyage & The Toy of the Poor Summary

In "The Clock", Baudelaire comments that the Chinese can tell the time to the minute by looking in to a cats eyes and states that this is a very real concept as he looks into the eyes of a female companion of his that he names as Feline. He says that he sees eternity in her eyes. Baudelaire then comments that Feline should find this to be a fitting compliment to her to match her pompousness and that due to the joy he found in writing it, he will not charge her.

In "A Hemisphere in Her Hair", Baudelaire comments on all that he finds in the black hair of a woman. He pictures hours on a divan, men at port and cities that reach to the skies of a blue that do not exist for him. He describes the scents ranging from tobacco and opium to musk, to coconut. The texture he describes of silk and full of memories.

In "Invitation to the Voyage", the narrator tells of a country called Cockaigne, where all is tranquil and peaceful. He tells of how he would like to visit this place with an old friend. He imagines this place to be the place where culture and creation are in the air to be breathed in by those who reside there. He continues his description as a place where all is cover in silks, gold and the furniture is full of secret compartments and locks that hold secrets, comparing it the souls of men. The narrator admits that this is a mythical place he has built in his head that is all to resemble a woman, whose name he does not mention.

In "The Toy of the Poor", the narrator suggests that one should spend just a bit of money on a small toys, something inexpensive, but a child's diversion, such as flat puppet, and give them out to the children that beg outside the taverns. The narrator tells of how the children will be wary at first and then will snatch up the toys as if they are the only ones that the child has ever owned. The narrator then defers the tale to a gate down the road, behind which is a lush garden in which a wellborn child sits with a discarded toy at its side. The child is watching another child on the other side of the gate, playing among the thistles and brambles. Through the gate, the poorer child shows the rich one that they have been playing with a toy as well, a live rat. Both children laugh and smile with teeth that are equally white.



Section 6: The Clock, A Hemisphere in Her Hair, Invitation to the Voyage & The Toy of the Poor Analysis

In "The Clock", Baudelaire comments that the female companion of Feline is appropriately named, as there is a saying that the Chinese can tell the time by looking into a cat's eyes and that he can see eternity in her eyes. Baudelaire does not actually advise if seeing an eternity is a joyful or disdainful thing to him, but judging by the parting comments in the piece, where he comments that she should be satisfied by the compliment, one would assume that he is patronizing her. "A Hemisphere in her Hair" is written in a sensual prose to stimulate the readers imagination similar the way that The Port was written, giving lengthy description of a scent, feel, thought invoked, taste or even a sound that the reader must bring to life. In "Invitation to a Voyage", the narrator describes the wonderous country of Cockaigne, which he then admits is only a figment of his imagination, based on the woman that he loves. In "The Toy of the Poor", the narrator shows a kind heart by suggesting that the reader should buy a lot of cheap toys for children. His description shows that children are easily amused. This poem, like so many of the others, explores the realms of social class and poverty.



Section 7: The Fairies' Gifts, The Temptations: Or, Eros, Plutus, and Fame & Evening Twilight

Section 7: The Fairies' Gifts, The Temptations: Or, Eros, Plutus, and Fame & Evening Twilight Summary

In "The Fairies' Gifts", the Fairies gathered together to grant gifts to the children born within the days time, and all the fairies are diverse in the their giving. The gifts to be bestowed on the children were abilities and skills that would dictate the lives and fates of the children brought to them by the fathers of those children, but the Fairies had to work quickly within a certain timeframe. At last, the Fairies thought that their task was done as there where no more gifts to give, when a poor tradesman grabbed hold of the neared Fairy and cried out "Oh Madame, you are forgetting us. There is still my child." The Fairy looked embarrassed as there was nothing to bestow on this child, but then the Fairy thought of a law that was put in place for this very reason and blessed the child with the ability to Please. The poor man asked what that meant, to please whom, and how. This incensed the Fairy, who returned to the procession, asking "What do you think of this conceited little Frenchman, who wants to understand everything, and who, upon having obtained for his son the very best of fates, still dares to question what can't be questioned, and debate what can't be debated?"

In "The Temptations: Or, Eros, Plutus, and Fame", the narrator tells of two devils and one She-devil that came to him one night. This demon offered to make him the lord of souls, that he might be able to take other's souls into himself and lose himself in others if he chose. The narrator thanks the demon but declines the offer, as he has no interest in losing himself or experiencing other souls that are a poor as he. The second Satan offered the narrator that which would give him everything that was worth everything and what could replace everything. Again the narrator declined as he did not need for his pleasure the misery of others and did not wish to carry the reminder of other suffering. Although the narrator was compelled by the She-devil, her voice brought to mind a memory that he had seen her before, in the pubs with men that he did not care for, so he declined her offer, saying that he did not wish to wed the mistress of men that he did not care for. The narrator awoke to find himself in weak condition and states that he must have been in a deep slumber for him to act so morally. He called out to the devils to return and promised to take back whatever he had said, but states that he must have truly offended them as they never returned. In "Evening Twilight", Baudelaire comments that while for some who are calmed and weary from a day's long labor, there are some who are ill afflicted by the coming of the night. He recounts that two of his friends are so afflicted, whereas one would become so conflicted in his behavior that he once threw a roast chicken at a head waiter because he thought that he found an insulting hieroglyphic inside. The other became increasingly bitter as darkness descended. The



first of the two men died of madness. The second carries the anxiety of what the darkness will bring for him. Baudelaire comments that he finds it both amusing and alarming as the night brings him such joy, calling it an interior holy day and comparing it to the Goddess Liberty.

Section 7: The Fairies' Gifts, The Temptations: Or, Eros, Plutus, and Fame & Evening Twilight Analysis

In "The Fairies' Gifts", social class is again investigated as the narrator discusses the wealthy man's son whom the fairies bestow the gift of wealth on; however, because they forget to bestow him with the gift of generosity, he will never share his wealth with the less fortunate. This seems to be Baudelaire's means of criticizing the upper class and wealthy and the fact that they do not share with the poverty-stricken. When the fairy bestows the ability to please upon the tradesman's son, the tradesman questions the fairy about who the son will please and when, but the fairy tells him not to question what cannot be questioned.

In "The Temptations: Or, Eros, Plutus and Fame", the narrator describes two devils and the one she-devil that visited him one night. The narrator listens to their offers but decides not to take any of them. When the narrator wakes, weakened, he regrets acting so morally and begs the devils to come back; however, his refusals must have insulted them as they do not return. In "Evening Twilight", the narrator compares the night to a disease that afflicts certain people in such negative way that he recounts the stories of two of his friends that were afflicted by such a malady. Baudelaire seems to acknowledge the labors of the tired and oppressed in that they find comfort in the nights coming, while his friends were ill-affected by the dawn of the darkness, so much so that they one died of madness and the other fears what he may do in the coming nights. In all the comparisons of these two friends and the laborers, the narrator compares it to the Goddess of Liberty.



Section 8: Solitude, Plans, Beautiful Dorothy & The Eyes of the Poor

Section 8: Solitude, Plans, Beautiful Dorothy & The Eyes of the Poor Summary

In "Solitude", Baudelaire conveys the story a journalist once told him that solitude was bad for man and cites various gospels to back up his theory. Baudelaire however, prefers the solitude, but the journalist seems unwilling to let the topic go. The journalist asks him then, "Do you not feel, then, the need to share your joys?" In "Plans", the gentleman making plans walks amid a splendid garden and thinks of his lady. He pictures her in a palace with such gardens to match her royal air. As the day passes along, he spies a shop with a carved print that depicts a far off land where there would be a cabin that he and his lady could while away the days. And then again on his way home, he meanders past an inn, in which he sees the all the necessary things that he and his lady need. The gentleman continues home, and upon his arrival he decides what a joy it is to make plans, for he had lived in three places that day and never had to move.

In "Beautiful Dorothy", the sun is at it highest, and while the townspeople nap, Dorothy takes advantage of the quiet shore. The narrator then asks why she would be braving the heat of the high sun, leaving her chambers that are so comfortable and filled with joys that should not drive her out. The narrator wonders if she is secretly meeting with someone to hear news of Paris or of Operas and if these things and places are as beautiful as she. She would be entirely happy if she were only able to not have to scrimp every cent to buy back her young sister who will in time be more beautiful than she, but she must do so as the man who owns her sister is unable to see any beauty other than money.

"The Eyes of the Poor" opens with the narrator telling a woman that he hates her today and that the reason will be easier for him to tell than it will be for her to understand. He tells of a day where they approached a gilded café where there was a poor man walking with two children, one old enough to walk and one he carried. The narrator felt such pity for these people that he felt ashamed of their glasses and carafes that were so much bigger than their thirst, and as he looked into the woman's eyes to see his own thoughts reflected there, she said that those people were a nuisance and ask if he could fetch the head waiter to have them escorted away. This is why the narrator hates the woman, as she does not share his thoughts as he thought she had.



Section 8: Solitude, Plans, Beautiful Dorothy & The Eyes of the Poor Analysis

In "Solitude", the narrator of the story has blatantly shown the preference for solitude while being interrupted by a journalist who not only ignores the man's preference, but also tries to prove that it is harmful to men in the quotes of the bible. In a counterstance, Baudelaire appears to show that the man, who cannot tolerate solitude, cannot stand to be with only himself. In such, he implies that the man that cannot stand solitude might have to have others around so as not to be alone with his own thoughts that may plague a man when he has not lived as his soul required. In "Plans", the gentleman's plans for where to travel to change frequently as his day progresses, illustrating lack of contentment in anywhere he may be. His restlessness is only countered in that in all his imaginings, the man only has one woman by his side. His depictions are so vivid that he no longer has a need to travel as he is always traveling when he wants in his mind, which in turn keeps him close to his love and in which he finds satisfaction.

"Beautiful Dorothy" depicts a woman of great beauty, a regal air and the freedom that comes from moments of solitude and simple pleasures of thing like going barefoot, which was not a common practice at the time. There are so many adornments that are described in this woman's beauty that when the final lines are read, in which she saves every cent to be able to buy back her sister, the full weight of the title of this prose can be understood, for with all her finery and grace, her heart is even more beautiful than her outward appearance.



Section 9: A Heroic Death, Counterfeit Money & The Generous Gambler

Section 9: A Heroic Death, Counterfeit Money & The Generous Gambler Summary

In "A Heroic Death", Fancioulle is a jester who is close to the Prince, who was drawn into a conspiracy by a Lord who decided to change the world's scenery by rebellion. The Lord, his fellow conspirators and Fancioulle were all arrested and sentenced to death. So when a rumor began that the Prince may forgive the conspirators, it was placed on the announcement that Fancioulle was to play one of his most famous roles for the court and that the other conspirators were to complete the cast. On that night, Fancioulle played his role so perfectly that he became the embodiment of the character and depicted no measure of his own person. The crowd was so moved that they no longer even thought of the death that was to follow when the Prince whispered to a small page next to him. Moments later, in Fancioulle's greatest moment, there was a hissing noise that broke through the reverie, and Fancioulle fell dead on the stage.

In "Counterfeit Money", a man and his companion leave a tobacco shop, and his companion separates each of his coins to separate pockets. The two come upon a beggar man and the companion provides a larger sum. The man compliments his friend on his generosity, when his companion admits that the coins are counterfeit. The narrator then contemplates out several possibilities that these coins can have on the beggar's life. The narrator then realizes that his companion is a foolish man who made the error of evil through stupidity. In "The Generous Gambler", the narrator travels a street that he has traveled a great deal and encounters a man that he recognizes but has never met. The man bids him to follow into a lower sanctum that is richly decorated. There are several more people in this sanctuary, and the narrator comments how they have the look of the boredom that will seek any form of living. At some point in the evening, the narrator states that he bet and lost his soul to the man but felt no real loss of it, and he continues with his drinking and discussions with the stranger. In their conversations of life, history and philosophy, the narrator learns that the stranger is in fact the Devil, who confesses his only real fear is the loss of his power. As dawn approaches, the Devil concedes to award the narrator to never suffer boredom, to never form a desire that he would never assist to be furnished with flattery and adoration, with no effort to obtain it. Upon the Devil's departure, the narrator is stricken with doubt, and ironically, he prays to God that the Devil keeps his promise.



Section 9: A Heroic Death, Counterfeit Money & The Generous Gambler Analysis

In "A Heroic Death", the introspection of the poet is in that of the aristocracy of the Prince, depicted as an arrogant man who cannot bear to be outdone by his own plot to bring out the greatness in the actor he has condemned to play his last performance before his death. Baudelaire's insight into the performance that was described as that to never be outdone to the motives of the Prince, show both Baudelaire's self arrogance and his appreciation of the arts. The comparison of the poet and his characters is also shown in the empathy that is depicted in The Old Mountebank. In "Counterfeit Money", the complications of the mind are shown in trying to outwit the powers that be by using an act of charity to commit an act of deceit that may or may not have a favorable outcome. The narrator comments that he originally thought that this might well be a social experiment that his friend was practicing, but then soon discovers that the man is full of greed for both the wealth and the final destination. In "The Generous Gambler", much like that of the angel that lost his halo, Baudelaire writes the antithesis in this tale where he regards the devil as the generous benefactor to the young poet in that he has taken his soul but has granted him the lack of boredom and no needs for any wants that the devil will not assist with. With this description, Baudelaire again challenges the reader to think in the opposition of what they were brought up to believe, that the devil could be a charitable entity.



Section 10: The Rope, Vocations, The Thyrsus & Get Yourself Drunk

Section 10: The Rope, Vocations, The Thyrsus & Get Yourself Drunk Summary

In "The Rope", the narrator opens with a paragraph stating that illusions and reality are often different except for a mother's love. The narrator tells a story from the point of view of an artist who is taken by the face of a young boy. He was so taken that he frequently had the child pose for him and eventually he begged the poor boy's parents to relieve him to his care. He provided the child with the fineries of life, but the child was yet stricken with fits of melancholy and thievery. The artist was taken away on business, and upon his return he found the boy hanging dead from an armoire. Fighting fear, the narrator musters the courage to tell the child's parents of his death. The father expresses both grief and relief, while the mother remains stoic. As the narrator prepares for the boy's burial, the mother arrives to see her child and then requests to see the place of his demise. Upon seeing the nail and the rope still hanging from the armoire, the narrator attempts to spare the mother further anguish. However, the mother had spied the rope and nail and seized them as though they were a dear relic. In his attempts to return to his normal life, the narrator receives multiple letters from neighbors requesting that they have a piece of the deadly rope, and it dawns on the narrator as to why the mother so desperately took the implements of her son's death.

In "Vocations", four boys gather and talk on an autumn day. The first tells the others that they took him to the theater the day before. The second boy, who seems to no longer be listening to the first, suddenly points out that it appeared as though God, himself, were sitting on a particular cloud, watching them. The third boy tells the others that he had gone on a trip with his parents, and as there were not enough beds, he had to sleep next to his maid. He told them that he was unable to sleep and so he decided to play with her a bit. The fourth boy finally speaks. He says that no one ever takes him to places like the theater, that God does not bother with him and that he is not pampered to have a maid, but that he is never happy to be where he is. He tells the others that at the fair there were three men who the others had not noticed, but he had. The men were dark and dressed in rags, but walked tall and proud. The boy tells them that the men had made music and that he found it so intense that he describes it as making you want to dance and to cry, and if you listened to it too long you'd go mad. The boy followed these men and found that they went where ever they felt like going, but they seemed very happy to be doing so. The look on the boy's face was one that usually incites sympathy in others. As the sun sets, the boys go their separate ways to follow their destinies.

In "The Thyrsus", Baudelaire first states that the Thyrsus is a stick that is straight and has vines and flowers wound around it, used by priests and priestesses as an emblem



of celebration for the divinity that they serve. Baudelaire likens it to the male and female to the strength of one's will and the fantasy that winds around it. He calls it "...the all-powerful and indivisible amalgam of genius". Baudelaire writes to Liszt and states in a list of possibilities of location and endeavors that he salutes him and his immortality. In "Get Yourself Drunk", Baudelaire advises that one should always be drunk, be it on poetry, wine, or on virtue. As Time burdens down life with deadliness and servitude, one should get drunk on something to elevate yourselves from the slavery of Time.

Section 10: The Rope, Vocations, The Thyrsus & Get Yourself Drunk Analysis

"The Rope" depicts a young boy whose death is caused by living with an artist. The rope acts as a symbol of the boy's death as well as being the means of his death. The boy's suicide suggests that he is very unhappy. In "Vocations", the comparisons of the four experiences of the boys in the story clearly show what the narrator supposes that their futures will hold. Although Baudelaire seems to take great joy in the pleasures that boys all described, he is taken the most with the fourth boy's tale of travel and seeing the world. He even goes so far as to comment that he wonders if he has a brother that he never knew of. The boy's passion for the idea is what speaks the most to him. In "The Thyrsus", Baudelaire compares and contrasts the stick and the vines of flowers of a Thyrsus. He points out the very male and female characteristics of the Thyrsus. He questions if the flowers were chosen for the stick or the stick for the vines, and ultimately, who decides, much as in the marriages of the time. "Get Yourself Drunk" is one of Baudelaire's commentaries on indulgence of the pleasures, be they wine, women or song, as a soul without indulgence is left to a laborious fate and boredom.



Section 11: Already!, Windows & The Desire to Paint

Section 11: Already!, Windows & The Desire to Paint Summary

In "Already!", the narrator reviews that a hundred suns have risen and set over the seas while in and among those passengers of a ship that ranted endless, in the perspective of the narrator, of the thing of home and the jostling of being at sea. Once land was spotted, the passengers became joyous and the quarrels that had started on board was now forgotten and the people exclaimed "Finally", while the narrator alone thought, "Already", for the narrator had found the sea rich of life and beauty. In passing to land, the narrator finds renewed beauty in its depths and pursues it.

In "Windows", Baudelaire states that to see what happens by looking onto a closed window lit by candle is far more fascinating than to look into an open window or to look at a closed one in daylight. From his view in his home he has seen an old poor woman that he has watched and admits to taking clues from her face, walk and clothing to have made a legend for her in his mind, and that sometimes the legend is enough to bring him to tears. He says that if you were to ask him if he were sure that this legend were true, he would advise what would it matter if he feels as though he has suffered for it.

In "The Desire to Paint", Baudelaire compares the woman to the new moon, the darkness of the moon on a storming night and the predator that lurks in the nights. He states that he wishes to paint her but cannot be able to imagine how to paint a black star that shines happiness. He compares her mouth to a flower blooming on volcanic soil, and her gaze as one that foretells his death in this joy.

Section 11: Already!, Windows & The Desire to Paint Analysis

In "Already!", it is evident that the symbolism of the travels of the vessel that contained many people with quarrels, boredom, and even duels is compared to that of the people coming to the end of their lives in the time when life was short. In the repeated compulsion that Baudelaire has to stating his love for life is shown in his exclamation that although the others may be joyous that the trip is over, he feels remiss. In "Windows", the idea that what lies behind a closed window is more interesting than that of an open window or one lit during the day, is a poetic linear of the idea that what is hidden is always sought out, as humans are curious creatures. In "The Desire to Paint", the comparison of a woman to a new moon, wild and sinister, as an equal to the light of the full moon is a contradiction to those many poets of the time who compared woman

to that of the light of a full moon, and in essence states that not all woman are as light and gentle by nature but they are womanly just the same.



Section 12: The Favors of the Moon, Which is the Real One?, A Thoroughbred & The Mirror

Section 12: The Favors of the Moon, Which is the Real One?, A Thoroughbred & The Mirror Summary

In "The Favors of the Moon", the narrator tells of how the Moon took favor of a beautiful child, and in doing so she creeps into the child room and caresses the child like a mother, leaving her blessing on its face and filled the room with phosphorescent colors. These are the reasons for the pale skin and the enlarged green eyes of the grown child, the marks that she carries the Moon's Blessing. The narrator goes on to tell that the curse of this blessing is that the child would love what the moon loved and be loved by those that loved the Moon and this is the birth of lunatics.

In "Which is the Real One?", the narrator describes a beautiful Benedicta whose eyes were bright and so full of the wants of the world, for beauty, fame and fortune. As such a beauty, she died young and the narrator buried her in a perfumed coffin likened to a treasure chest. Then an identical woman began clawing the earth of the grave, raving that she is the real Benedicta and that he, the narrator, being blind, would be doomed to love her just as she was. In his rejection, the narrator stomped his foot violently and sank to the knee in the earth. He states that this is his punishment, to be attached to the grave of the ideal.

In "A Thoroughbred", she is described as ugly, weathered and almost skeletal in appearance. She has seen the days that have beaten down others and she has learned her lessons by cruelty, yet she holds a noble air that will always separate the thoroughbred from the rest. For this nobility that she holds, the narrator as a rare beauty considers her in a manner that only a connoisseur would be able to recognize. In "The Mirror", the narrator sees a hideous man looking into a mirror and asks him why he would look into a mirror when all he could possibly see would not bring him pleasure. The man replies that he has the right to gaze in a mirror, as per the law, all men are equal, and to answer the narrator's question, where he views his reflection with pleasure or displeasure is no one's business but his own.

Section 12: The Favors of the Moon, Which is the Real One?, A Thoroughbred & The Mirror Analysis

"The Favors of the Moon" can be taken as a glorified praise to himself in the face of another. He comments that the moon favored some by breathing her essence into them, but in many ways he is too blatant about his insinuations that he has been gifted by the



moon as thus. In "Which One is the Real One", the narrator being haunted by the Benedicta after her death and burial is a mental description of the actions of many that grieve the loss of a loved one, by standing vigil at the graveside. It asks the question, do you not ever want to leave? "A Thoroughbred" is practically a resume for a poet, as it consists of finding the beauty in the ugly, the proud in the disheveled, and this in essence is what the poet lives for. In "The Mirror", when a decrepit man looks at his own reflection, the narrator comments that this is a useless task and questions the man's motive to want to see his own reflection. The man's reply that men are equal and whether or not he is satisfied with the reflection is no one's business other than his own. The comment at the end that Baudelaire makes that that although the man is correct by law, that he himself is correct as well, displays his arrogance and need to be noted as profoundly correct.



Section 13: The Port, Portraits of Mistresses & The Gallant Marksman

Section 13: The Port, Portraits of Mistresses & The Gallant Marksman Summary

In "The Port", the narrator describes a port as resting place for the wearied eyes. He sees the port as a place where the adventurous leave and the weary return. In "Portraits of Mistresses", four men sit talking and smoking in a gambling house. One man begins a conversation of women, of which he proceeds to describe the stages that a man progresses through when he takes on a mistress. The man tells of his last Mistress, who was the bastard child of a Prince and was power hungry, so much so that she continuously commented that "If she were a man" or made further comments on her benefactor's choices. The second man interjected with his own story that although he had not had complaints of himself, he had missed his chance at happiness. His tale of his mistress was that she was always willing to please him but that she found no pleasure in it for herself, so after a year of trying, he gave her up. After some time he decided to visit her and found her married with six children and still happy to please her husband at his wishes. The third gentleman then told of how he admired his last mistress but that she was always hungry. The fourth and final gentleman claimed he envied the others for their ability to have found flaws in their mistresses, as he is otherwise afflicted. He asks the other men to imagine a woman who is incapable of making an error. He regrets her as she prevented him from reaping the burden of his own folly, placed rules that thwarted all his whims and then had the exasperating indecency to not asked to be thanked once she had prevented the danger from coming. He said he could bear it no more. How many times he had not wanted to choke the life from her for never making an error, so it went until it drove the man mad and with his sense of fairness, he could neither dismiss her nor beat her down. None-the-less, it was pronounced that she was dead.

In "The Gallant Marksman", a man traveling stops to kill time by enjoying some target practice. Each shot the man fires goes wildly askew. The man's wife bursts out laughing at his terrible aim. The man points out to his wife that the doll on the end is one that he is imagining to be her and he fires one shot and decapitates the doll cleanly. He then turns to his wife, bows, kissed her hand and compliments her by saying that he owes all his skill to her.

Section 13: The Port, Portraits of Mistresses & The Gallant Marksman Analysis

"The Port" is a descriptive moment painted in the words of the narrator for no further purpose than for him to paint a mental picture and to feel as though he shared in the



moment of those who look to port as a part of their lives. In "Portraits of Mistresses", four men tell tales of their mistresses, and with the first three men the tales are that of which the world has heard men lament before. The mistresses of these three show greed, gluttony, and vanity, but it is the tale of the fourth man that stops the other in their conversation. The fourth man's complaint was that his mistress was too perfect, and instead of displaying a sinful nature, she displayed one of a charitable nature. In this the man was driven mad in a way so that he killed his mistress, as since she was so perfect, the only way to restore balance would be to remove her from the equation.

In "The Gallant Marksman", the marksman's ability to hit his target is dependent on his hatred for his wife. He shows her a strange gratitude by paying her the compliment that he owes all his skill to her when in fact, prior to the last doll, he displayed no skills. This poem is a backwards way of portraying the old saying that behind every good man there is a good woman.



Section 14: The Soup and the Clouds, The Firing Range and the Graveyard, Loss of a Halo & Mademoiselle Bistouri

Section 14: The Soup and the Clouds, The Firing Range and the Graveyard, Loss of a Halo & Mademoiselle Bistouri Summary

In "The Soup and the Clouds", a man sits contemplating the clouds while his wife prepares his soup for dinner. He ponders the wonder that God has made the clouds and how they inspire him to think of his wife. His wife, whom he calls his beloved little maniac as she punches him in the back and tells him to eat his dinner, interrupts him from his thoughts.

In "The Firing Range and the Graveyard", Baudelaire comes across "The Graveyard View Tavern" and thinks to himself that this must be a type of homage to the Egyptians or poets. He partakes of a glass of beer and a cigar while overlooking the tombs and decides to walk among the graves. He swears he hears the murmur of life around him, which is broken by rifle shots of a neighboring rifle range. He then hears the voices of the dead cursing him as one of the living who follows ambitions and schemes and disrespects those who have long ago hit the target called death.

In "Loss of a Halo", the narrator is surprised to find a friend of his walking the streets and asks how he came to be in such a nasty place. The friend replied that in his hurry to cross the boulevard and avoid being run down by the horses he so fears, his halo had slipped from his head. He had decided that its loss was no less unpleasant than being trampled. The friend also notes that on the upside, he is able to give himself up to debauchery like every other mortal, that the dignity bores him and that it amuses him to think of some fool poet picking it up and placing it upon their head and thus imposing impish charity.

In "Mademoiselle Bistouri", the narrator, walking along the outer edge of town, is gripped by a woman asking him if he's a doctor. He advises her that she is incorrect and she persists that he is a comical doctor and she has known quite a few. He accompanies her to her home where she pampers him and admires the portraits of several famous doctors hung on the wall. She speaks as if she knows him and insists that he is a doctor. She goes so far as to pull out a bundle of packets with celebrated doctor's portraits. Some of whom the narrator recognizes, one of whom he knows. Her obsession ironically drives the narrator to ask her further questions regarding her obsession and secretly questions God as to how she may have become this way.



Section 14: The Soup and the Clouds, The Firing Range and the Graveyard, Loss of a Halo & Mademoiselle Bistouri Analysis

In "Soup and Clouds", the man in the poem refers to his wife as his beloved maniac. In his endearments, he reflects that although his wife is a slightly violent and loud, he still calls her his beloved. This is further reinforced in that his contemplation of the clouds, he compares their creation to his beloved little monster.

In "The Firing Range and the Graveyard", the narrator comes across a pub that he decides has an Egyptian homage in that it overlooks a graveyard. The supposition that the small village would have a well-born education is an odd one, but the narrator procures a glass of beer and a cigar under this supposition. The voices of the graves come in a time where they curse the living for they have no respect for those who obtained the final goal of death and in opposite reflection to the original supposition that the pub and the graveyard are an homage, the dead comment that they find it to be an insult. In "Loss of a Halo", Baudelaire displays his sense of humor in that he depicts an angel having lost his halo and in doing so the angel finds a devilish humor in the idea of members of Baudelaire's friends having to enact moments of charity and giving joy, instead of evil moments of bring down other as the companion in Counterfeit Money. In "Mademoiselle Bistouri", the woman encountered has an unhealthy obsession with doctors, so much so that she insists that the narrator of the story is one. The narrator admits to moments of obsession in to discovering the reason for her claim. For her healthy pallor, she is clearly a sick woman that the narrator prays for.



Section 15: Any Where Out of the World, Let's Beat Up the Poor! & Good Dogs

Section 15: Any Where Out of the World, Let's Beat Up the Poor! & Good Dogs Summary

In "Any Where Out of the World", the narrator compares the restlessness of the human spirit to that of patience switching beds at a hospital. This has the narrator contemplating a discussion with his soul as to where it would be happier living. The narrator suggests several locations to his soul but his soul is unresponsive. Finally, the narrator suggests living at the Pole at the end of the Baltic and the wise soul cries out, "anywhere! anywhere! As long as it's out of this world!"

In "Let's Beat up the Poor", the narrator, having been bed-stricken for several weeks, had taken to reading several of the popular books of the time. Upon his recovery, he decides to go to a tavern, outside of which he encounters an elderly beggar. The narrator recalls several of the recent books he read depicting the equalization of men. As such, the narrator takes to vigorously beating the elderly beggar, who in turn surprises the narrator by beating him back twice as hard. As a result of their combat, the narrator now sees the beggar as an equal and invites him to share his purse and spread his teachings.

In "Good Dogs", the narrator expresses a displeasure with dogs and yet likens them very much so to humans. He further describes the commonalities with dogs and humans as to how they go about their business in their daily lives. He comments on several breeds of well-bred dog that were popular during that era and seems to equate them with the same aristocratic heir and uselessness attributed to the aristocracy itself. He then recounts the more common breeds and their daily activities much like that of the common man, equating their emotions as well. He projects their pride at rivaling horses pulling a cart as working for their dinner and pursuing their pleasures. The narrator asks the question, "Where do good dogs go?" In his tales, the poet is given a fine waistcoat that was awarded the painter and given as a gift to the poet for his philosophy on dogs, and the poet recounts this philosophy each time he puts it on.

Section 15: Any Where Out of the World, Let's Beat Up the Poor! & Good Dogs Analysis

In "Any Where Out of this World", the narrator in this poem is depicted as questioning his soul, and he makes suggestions of places to relocate for the purpose of making his soul happy. The unresponsive soul makes the narrator question if his soul is even alive, and when the soul's response is that anywhere will make it happy, as long as it is out of this world, there is a suicidal disposition suggested. In "Let's Beat up the Poor", having



been locked in his rooms for a great deal of time, the narrator comes up with the ideal that if a man can beg for money, then he must be of equal measure to the man he is asking. The idea of beating up the poor beggar man in turn brings the beggar to the respect of the narrator, and in turn the narrator shares his purse with the man. Oddly the old beggar man understands the narrator's logic and in turn abides to teach others as well.

"Good Dogs" acts as a comparison of the different types of people. Baudelaire points out a few popular breeds with the aristocracy at the time and notes that these breeds seem to be of no more use or assistance to mankind than the aristocrats are to the people of this time. His descriptions add his imposed sense of pride and other emotions to the animals, much like to the legend that he applied to the old woman in Windows.



Characters

Charles Baudelaire appears in Paris Spleen

Charles Baudelaire is the author of "Paris Spleen", a collection of poetry from the late nineteenth century. Baudelaire attempts to mimic Aloysius Bertrand's "Gaspard de la nuit" by emulating the prose poetry in Bertrand's collection. Baudelaire writes to his editor, describing his inspiration and his view of his failure in accomplishing his goal to emulate another author's style, though, in essence, Baudelaire accomplished a separate goal by creating his own style which authors since have attempted to emulate. This creation gives Baudelaire both pride for his creation and shame for failing to accomplish his original goal.

Several of the works in Baudelaire's collection reflect both human-natured views of less fortunate people within his surroundings by acknowledging a measure of guilt for being more fortunate, while simultaneously showing his disdain for the laboring class and his fascination with the contradiction. He repeatedly displays pleasure in the indulgence of the senses and pleasures of the soul, be they moral or not, and in some cases the opposite in making the immoral moral. This collection is published posthumously in 1869 by Baudelaire's sister and is frequently considered a part of the modernist literary movement.

Raymond N MacKenzie appears in Introduction

Raymond N MacKenzie is a professor of English Literature, the translator of this collection, and the author of the Introduction. MacKenzie provides the informative side to the biography of the author, as well as the environment that this work was first published in its original form. MacKenzie references several other authors and essays, giving a range to the views of this collection and its effect on literature.

MacKenzie compares Baudelaire's works with the events of a murder and his capitalization of the market. His views into this work produce a description of Baudelaire to the reader, showing an egotistical man who self analyzed and was brutally forthcoming regarding his own character flaws, that in turn allowed Baudelaire to further compliment himself on his own ability to destruct his self-worth publicly. MacKenzie also points the similar qualities that are portrayed in another work of Baudelaire, titled La Fanfarlo, in which there is depicted a character named Samuel Cramer who displays many of Baudelaire's attributes.

Fancioulle appears in A Heroic Death

Fancioulle is a jester who is favored in the court, especially for his mute roles, so much that he is noted as practically a friend of the Prince. A Lord catches Fancioulle in a conspiracy of rebellion against the Prince. He is arrested and sentenced to death for his



involvement. He is given the chance to play for the Prince within a cast assembled of the other conspirators. On the night of the performance, Fancioulle gives the best performance of his life, and in his shining moment, when all had forgotten that he was a condemned man, he is killed in the middle of his act.

The Prince appears in A Heroic Death

Noted as a connoisseur of pleasures, the Prince is faced with the charges that his favorite actor was in conspiracy to form a rebellion against him. The Prince decides to have the actor, Fancioulle, play one of his most famous roles and to have the other conspirators complete the cast for the play. The Prince is also known as a terrible and conniving man, so in his act of demanding a play before the death of the conspirator, he appears to have mercy for Fancioulle. Instead, he has him killed by a small boy while in the middle of Fancioulle's greatest performance.

The Old Mountebank appears in The Old Mountebank

Old Mountebank is a poor old man in a ragged hut that sits at the outskirts of those at the fair that shows no wares for the masses. The man instills in Baudelaire the sense of pity for the man and yet embarrassment for him at the same time. In his own thoughts, Baudelaire wonders if perhaps the old man is a poet who is no longer sought by the masses.

Dorothy appears in Beautiful Dorothy

Dorothy is a bold and beautiful woman who takes little moments to enjoy the time of the high sun, when others slumber midday. She walks the shore alone, dressed in fine clothing, but without shoes. She is a tall proud woman with a narrow waist, long torso, wide hips and long hair that

Feline appears in The Clock

Feline is a woman who Baudelaire supposedly really kept company with who is mentioned in "The Clock" and is compared to her animal namesake, in that Baudelaire can see in her eyes the time, the same that is said the Chinese can with a cat. Her eyes are said to be green and to hold all of eternity.

The Old Woman appears in The Old Woman's Despair

The Old Woman is an elderly woman, described as decrepit, toothless and hairless, whose joy is to see the new child brought into her circle and is heartbroken that the child wails at her touch when all she meant was to please the child. In her rejection, she goes off alone to weep.



The Fairy appears in The Fairies' Gifts

A Fairy in and among the gathered fairies that hand out gifts to the newborn children, she is caught by a man whose child is forgotten, and in embarrassment calls forth the gift of "pleasing" for the boy, but is incensed when the father questions her gift to his child.

The Beloved Maniac appears in The Soup and the Clouds

The Beloved Maniac is the wife of a daydreamer, who in his thoughts he calls his green eyed monster and beloved little maniac. She is described in contradictory terms of affection that show that, although she may be a crazed or volatile woman, she is a loved woman.



Objects/Places

Paris appears in Paris Spleen

Paris is the main setting of the majority of the poems within this collection, especially the poorer areas of the city. Baudelaire uses an existential outlook on his surroundings to capture the beauty of life in the modern city.

Nature appears in The Artist's Confiteor

The artist is so drawn to the beautiful autumn that Nature creates that he praises it and wants to create a work to emulate it; however, he realizes that his work will pale in comparison to reality. Nature outdoes the artist before he even tries.

Room appears in The Double Room

The narrator sees beautiful colors and muted patterns while in the presence of the Idol. A knock at the door wakes him from his dreaming reverie to reveal his dusty room with stained windows and a calendar marked with publishing deadlines.

Statue of Venus appears in The Fool and Venus

A jester gazes sorrowfully at a statue of Venus in a park at sunset as Venus gazes off into the distance without registering the man at her feet.

Public Parks appears in The Widows

Public parks are the shady retreats that are the gathering places of those crippled by life.

Her Hair appears in A Hemisphere in her Hair

Baudelaire comments on all that he finds in a woman's black hair. He pictures hours on a divan, men at port and cities that reach the skies. Its scents range from tobacco and opium to musk to coconut, and its texture is silky and full of memories.

Cockaigne appears in Invitation to the Voyage

Cockaigne is a country where all is tranquil and peaceful, and where the narrator would like to visit with his friend.



Gifts appears in The Fairies' Gifts

The Fairies gather to grant gifts to the children born within a day. The gifts are abilities and skills that would dictate the lives and fates of the children.

Garden appears in Plans

The gentleman making plans walks through a garden, thinking of his lady and imagining her in a palace.

Coins appears in Counterfeit Money

When the narrator praises his friend's generosity to a beggar, the man confesses that the coins are counterfeit. This causes the narrator to contemplate the effects these coins could have in the beggar's life.

The Port appears in The Port

The port is a resting place for the wearied eyes. It is a place where the adventurous leave and the weary return.



Themes

Description

Description is used to incite the readers imagination to experience the words with no real plot, but with strictly the intention to convey to the readers senses the sensuality of a sight as in "The Port", or in a thing that Baudelaire found profoundly drawn to as in "A Hemisphere in Her Hair", where he describes the woman's black tresses in such detail that the reader cannot help but experience some part of the poet's muse. It is actually quite ironic that Baudelaire would repeat this theme in his works, as he also continuously depicts frustration and contempt for the masses that he says are incapable of this sensual reverie, but yet he persists to push on in painting these mental pictures for the reader's mind, as seen repeated in "The Double Room". In "The Double Room", Baudelaire describes the room in such detail that the only distinction the reader has for his fantasy to the reality of the life is the description of a room in muted colors to that of a dusty room with the smell of tobacco in the air.

One of the best examples of this in this set of works is "Plans". In "Plans", the narrator makes plans to travel with his beloved to various places and he sees her in them all. Lounging in a cabin, content in an Inn with rough sheets, and in a palace. At the conclusion of the piece, the narrator states plainly that he has no need to really travel as he has lived in three other places that day without traveling at all. In this poem, the pictures that are painted in the mind's eye are clear enough that even that the narrator pictures all that the reader does, and in turn each has taken a trip.

Self Contradiction

Baudelaire displays several examples of over examining his primary topic to the point of bringing himself around full circle and in the end contradicting his original staring point fully. In "The Temptations: Or, Eros, Plutus and Fame", Baudelaire tells a fully plotted story of the Satans and the She-Devil being rejected due to the narrator's morals of not wanting that which they offer at the suffering of others, then in the last stanza he reverses his stand and states that this was all a terrible mistake that he blames in his deep slumber.

This theme is also reflected as an overall thought when comparing one poem to another, as in "The Eyes of the Poor", where he states that he hates his woman, for she does not feel the same pity or shame in her thoughts as he feels in his for the hungry eyes looking in from the street, but then in "The Bad Glazier" he fully admits to being disgusted by the poor merchant and even goes so far as to abusing the man. Even in "Let's Beat Up the Poor", where the point is made in the reverse to "The Bad Glazier", the main character decides that he has no respect for the poor beggar as they are not equals, so he beats the old man mercilessly, and then the old beggar surprises him by



beating him back twice as hard, in turn winning his respect; therefore, the narrator sees him as equal and shares his purse.

Good v. Evil

Baudelaire has taken to the thought that indulging in one's pleasures, though viewed by the masses as a wicked behavior is good for the soul and therefore not evil at all. In "The Bad Glazier", he blames the wicked intention that took him to abuse the poor Glazier as that of a demon or imp inhabiting him. He does not claim to not have found joy in the act, only that the seed of the actions were not of his own nature. Yet in "Let's Beat up the Poor", he fails to blame the sudden urge to beat the poor old beggar on any demon, but instead on the recent knowledge that he has been imparted by his recent readings.

Baudelaire addresses the act of going against one's nature and lack of indulgence of the soul as a more poignant action of evil. In "The Loss of a Halo", the angel has dropped his halo in the mud, and when the narrator asks him to at least report the incident, the angel replies that it is much more amusing to think of some poor poet placing it upon his head and thus having to proceed with acts of generosity and charity. This idea that the angel would take actions that are perceived as wicked in the sense that they would force a man to go against his nature, though the outcome is one of honorable actions, is an amusing example of the divine sampling the indulgence of power over others. In a direct opposite form, in "The Generous Gambler" the devil wins a game of chance for the soul of the narrator and bestows the man with gifts of never suffering the disease of boredom and never having to form a desire that he devil would not assist with. This description gives the devil a charitable side that goes against what the religions would claim at the time.



Style

Point of View

Baudelaire's "Paris Spleen" is written through the utilization of a first person point of view. The point of view is seen through the eyes of an unnamed narrator, theoretically the author himself. This point of view is omniscient, which is proven by the fact that the narrator not only knows the actions of the events within the poems, but she can also tell the reader the thoughts and emotions of each of the characters. This point of view is important because "Paris Spleen" is a collection of poetry which makes it imperative that the reader understand the thoughts and feelings of the author in order to fully comprehend the poems. This would not be possible if the author did not utilize this point of view.

The poems are mostly written through exposition; however, several of the poems are comprised of a fairly equal distribution of exposition and dialogue, such as "The Wild Woman and the Little Mistress", "Plans" and "The Favors of the Moon". A few of the poems, "The Rope" for example, is composed almost exclusively from dialogue, while some of the poems that appear to be completely exposition could also be read as monologues. These poems utilize the technique of stream-of-consciousness from the narrator's viewpoint. The viewpoint throughout the poems is that of an unnamed narrator, likely the poet, who captures the beauty of life in the modern city using an existential outlook on his surroundings.

Setting

This collection of poems, "Paris Spleen", is set in the real world, specifically in Paris. The poems are based on Parisian contemporary life, following the style of the prose poems in Aloysius Bertrand's "Gaspard de la nuit". These poems examine poverty and social class, especially "The Toy of the Poor", "The Eyes of the Poor", "Counterfeit Money" and "Let's Beat Up the Poor". In these, Baudelaire examines different views of the urban poor. The setting of most of the poems within this collection is the Parisian metropolis, especially the more poverty-stricken areas of the city. By writing about the city, Baudelaire stresses the relationship between society and the individual. He does not show the beautiful streets of the Paris of the upper class in his poems; instead, he focuses on the dirty, poor areas of Paris that have social problems.

Another key setting in this collection is Baudelaire's own mind, as many of the poems are not set in a specific location. Moreover, Baudelaire utilizes the stream-of-consciousness technique to show his opinions on many things. In so doing, the author attempts to capture the beauty of life in the modern metropolis using an existential outlook on his surroundings.



Language and Meaning

The language of Baudelaire's poems in "Paris Spleen" tends to be casual and informal. The sentences are constructed according to proper grammar during the time period in which they were written, the nineteenth century. The style of the poems is inspired by Aloysius Bertrand's "Gaspard de la nuit", which is also a collection of prose poems. The language is easy to understand and aids comprehension which is necessary in a collection of poetry.

The poems are mostly written through exposition; however, several of the poems are comprised of a fairly equal distribution of exposition and dialogue, such as "The Wild Woman and the Little Mistress", "Plans" and "The Favors of the Moon". A few of the poems, "The Rope" for example, is composed almost exclusively from dialogue, while some of the poems that appear to be completely exposition could also be read as monologues. Baudelaire's use of prose poems is unconventional and indicative of the modernist movement in Europe, particularly in Paris, during his lifetime. As Baudelaire explains in the preface to his work, modernity requires a new language, "a miracle of a poetic prose, musical without rhythm or rhyme, supple enough and striking enough to suit lyrical movements of the soul, undulations of reverie, the flip-flops of consciousness" (p. 2).

Structure

Baudelaire's "Paris Spleen" is comprised of fifty poems, "To Arsene Houssaye" which serves as a preface, and an Introduction by the translator. The book is 102 pages long plus the ten-page Introduction. The poems average two pages in length and are titled to refer to the topic within each of them. Though each poem is rather short, they are also very detailed, following the technique of stream-of-consciousness.

The poems each focus on a different plot but are tied together through specific themes that are prevalent in all of Baudelaire's works. These themes include but are not limited to description, self-contradiction, pleasure, sobriety and intoxication, the artist or poet, women, mortality and the passage of time, the city, poverty and social class, and religion through the concept of the comparison of good and evil. Through stream-of-consciousness, Baudelaire utilizes the existential outlook to capture the beauty of life in the modern city of Paris, and these poems focus on modern Parisian life.

This collection of poems is quick paced and easy to understand. Flashbacks are included in some of the poems, due to the stream-of-consciousness technique that Baudelaire uses. Though sometimes the poems are a bit difficult to understand as a result of this technique, the collection is very entertaining overall.



Quotes

"Discontent with everything, discontent with myself, I would really like to redeem myself, to feel a bit of pride in the silence and solitude of the night." "At One in the Morning", page 18-19

"These shady retreats are the gathering places of those crippled by life." "The Widows", p. 23

"Every man carries within himself his dose of natural opium, endlessly hidden away and endlessly renewed..." "Invitation to the Voyage", p. 34

"Oh Madame, you are forgetting us. There is still my child." "The Fairies' Gifts", p. 39

"What do you think of this conceited little Frenchman, who wants to understand everything, and who, upon having obtained for his son the very best of fates, still dares to question what can't be questioned, and debate what can't be debated?" "The Fairies' Gifts", p. 40

"Drink, this is my blood, the perfect cordial." "The Temptations: Or, Eros, Plutus, and Fame", p. 41

"You don't feel, then, the need to share your joys?" "Solitude", p. 46

"Yes, you're right, there is no sweeter pleasure than surprising a man by giving him more than he hopes for." "Counterfeit Money", p. 59

"My dear brothers, never forget, when you wish to boast about the progress of enlightenment, that the finest of all the Devil's tricks was persuading you that he doesn't exist!" "The Generous Gambler", p. 61

"The straight line, the arabesque line, intention and expression, the straightness of the will, the sinuousness of the word, united toward one goal with varying means, the all-powerful and indivisible amalgam of genius..." "The Thyrsus", pp. 71-72

"We have lived fully, and we are in search of something we can love and admire." "Portraits of Mistresses", p. 84

"Anywhere! Anywhere! As long as it's out of this world!" "Any Where Out of the World", p. 97

"Away with the academic muse! I want nothing to do with that old prude. I invoke the familiar muse, the city girl, the lively one, for her to help me sing of good dogs, poor dogs, stinking dogs, the ones that everyone shoos away as if pestilent and flea-bitten, except for the poor whose companions they are, and the poet who regards them with a brotherly eye." "Good Dogs", p. 101



Topics for Discussion

Baudelaire uses imagery as not only a description of the people, objects or places that he is writing about, but also as the entire poem. Which image were you most drawn to and why?

Baudelaire has several poems in which he describes the poor, some in which glorify the poor for their strength of will and some that disparage the poor for their place. From the readings in this book, what do you think Baudelaire's attraction to these people are and why?

There are several various woman depicted in these works that range from sweet and demure to volatile and harsh. Which female character were you most intrigued by and why?

Which of these works were you most drawn to and why?

In the poem "A Heroic Death", what are your views on the Prince's actions? Compare and contrast them to those of the narrator's views.

In the poem, "The Fairies' Gifts", the gift to please was bestowed on the child who at the end had been forgotten. The Fairy stated that this was the most precious gift of all and the man was foolish to question it. Why do you suppose that this would be the most precious gift?

In "Portraits of Mistresses", there are four men who complain about their mistresses and what they put these men through. The last of the men killed his mistress, saying that it was to restore the balance. Please explain as to what balance you think was restored by her being removed from life and why.

In several of the poems, Baudelaire refers to the clouds in comment, description or in thoughts. What do the clouds represent to you in these works? Cite one instance when you feel that the clouds are significant and why.

Of all the descriptions of places, feelings, people and objects, which do you feel is the most overanalyzed and to what extent?