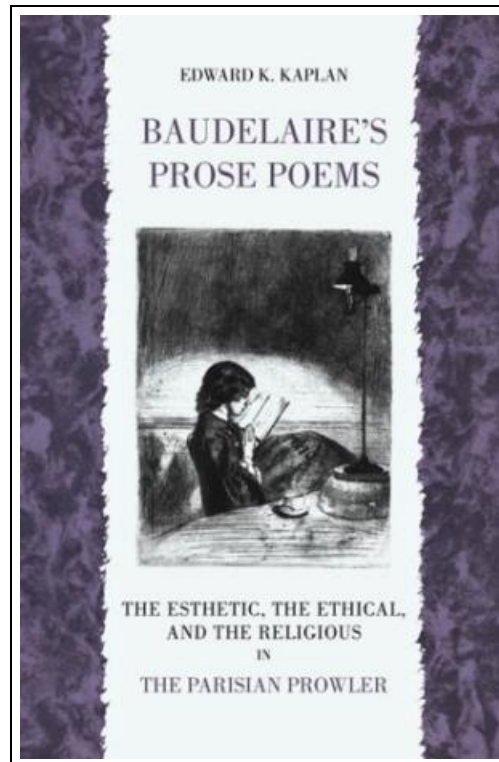


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Baudelaire s Prose Poems is the first full-length, integral study of the fifty prose poems Baudelaire wrote between 1857 and his death in 1867, collected posthumously under the title *Le Spleen de Paris*. Edward Kaplan resurrects this neglected masterpiece by defining the structure and meaning of the entire collection, which Kaplan himself has translated as *The Parisian Prowler*. Engaging in a dialogue with deconstructionists whose critical methods often obscure the meaning of the whole, Kaplan rejects the view of prose poems as a random assemblage of melodic rhapsodies. Instead, he sees a coherent ensemble of fables of modern life that join lyricism and critical self-awareness. Kaplan defines three dimensions of experience that inform *The Parisian Prowler* from beginning to end: the esthetic includes art, ideal beauty, and especially the intense immediacy of sensations, fantasy, and dream; the ethical includes principles of right and wrong, relations between intimates or between individuals and the community; and the religious--not to be confused with church or dogma--points to the province of ultimate reality, whether it be God or an absolute standard of truth, justice, and meaning. These dimensions are explored by a narrator, a complex, highly self-conscious writer whose passion for pure Beauty continually frustrates his yearning for affection. He begins his tour through 1850s Paris alienated from reality, becomes aggravated by conflicts between his ethical and esthetic drives--to the point of despair--and ends by expressing loyal friendship. Analyzing the fables in relation to one another in pairs or groups, Kaplan demonstrates how later pieces intermingle or even confuse the narrator s esthetic and ethical drives, and how the most advanced theoretical fables --through ironic puns on their form--further undermine this simplistic dualism....



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