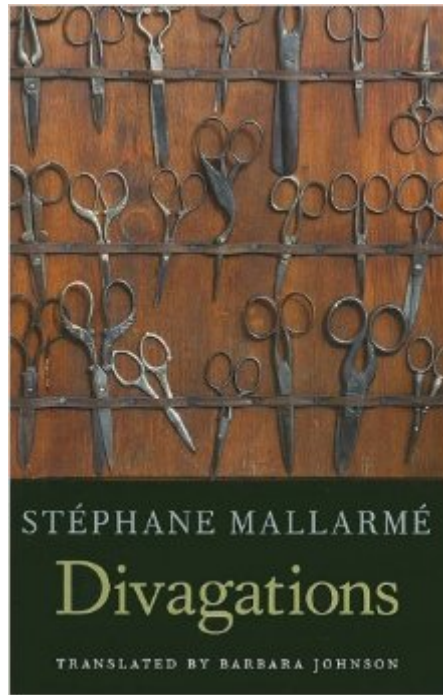


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Divagations



Synopsis

"This is a book just the way I don't like them," the father of French Symbolism, Stéphane Mallarmé, informs the reader in his preface to *Divagations*: "scattered and with no architecture." On the heels of this caveat, Mallarmé's diverting, discursive, and gorgeously disordered 1897 masterpiece tumbles forth--and proves itself to be just the sort of book his readers like most. The salmagundi of prose poems, prose-poetic musings, criticism, and reflections that is *Divagations* has long been considered a treasure trove by students of aesthetics and modern poetry. If Mallarmé captured the tone and very feel of fin-de-siècle Paris, he went on to captivate the minds of the greatest writers of the twentieth century--from Valéry and Eliot to Paul de Man and Jacques Derrida. This was the only book of prose he published in his lifetime and, in a new translation by Barbara Johnson, is now available for the first time in English as Mallarmé arranged it. The result is an entrancing work through which a notoriously difficult-to-translate voice shines in all of its languor and musicality. Whether contemplating the poetry of Tennyson, the possibilities of language, a masturbating priest, or the transporting power of dance, Mallarmé remains a fascinating companion--charming, opinionated, and pedantic by turns. As an expression of the Symbolist movement and as a contribution to literary studies, *Divagations* is vitally important. But it is also, in Johnson's masterful translation, endlessly mesmerizing.

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Customer Reviews

Agree with the previous reviewer: this is lithe, beautiful writing, as fresh as if it were written today.

Here is a great mind on display, dallying with digressions and knowing that it is they that actually get at the heart of things. The language is so poetic - made me finally believe that prose could be poetry. Mallarme takes one back to origins, to the need for freshness in approach and disinhibition in writing. Every poet needs to read this. A remarkable translation.

This book reveals a very different side of this fabulous poet. Having only encountered Mallarme through poetry I had no idea he was as funny and down to earth (in a very French way) as he is. He makes intelligent, mostly coherent comments on many subjects. Well worth having.

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