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Selected Writings (New Directions Books)



Synopsis

A bilingual, illustrated edition of *The Selected Writings of Apollinaire*, the only representative collection in English translation, with a comprehensive critical Introduction by the translator, Roger Shattuck. When Guillaume Apollinaire died in 1918 at the age of thirty-eight, as the result of a war wound, he was already known as one of the most original and important poets of his time. He had led the migration of Bohemian Paris across the city from Montmartre to Montparnasse; he had helped formulate the principles of Cubism, having written one of the first books on the subject, and coined the word "Surrealist"; and he had demonstrated in his own work those innovations we have come to associate with the most vital investigations of the avant-garde. This bilingual, illustrated edition of *The Selected Writings of Apollinaire*, the only representative collection in English translation, begins with a comprehensive critical Introduction by the translator, Roger Shattuck. The next section is devoted to poetry. Included here are almost half of Apollinaire's two best-known volumes, *Alcools* and *Calligrammes*, as well as a selection from five other books, and the long love poem *La Chanson du Mal-Aimé* in its entirety. The prose section leads off with "L'Esprit Nouveau et les Poètes", a seminal discussion of modern poetry that anticipates such movements as Dada and Futurism. This is followed by Apollinaire's almost unobtainable "Introduction to Baudelaire and Oneirocriticism", an early experimental work composed in a style prophetic of Surrealist automatic writing. There are, in addition, two stories, a passage from *Anecdotes*, and a section from the novel *Le Poète Assassin*.

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Customer Reviews

Although I'm not sure it'll be of interest to anyone other than myself, Guillaume Apollinaire was the poet/lit.critic who first jump-started my interest in Surrealism and French writing. If you have any interest in the above, or in world poetry in general, Apollinaire's writing is indispensable. For not only did he play an influential role in founding several important artistic and literary movements of the twentieth century (surrealism, dadaism, automatic writing and cubism) he was a talented poet whose writing, though difficult at times, is highly lyrical and more than worth reading.

Robert Wallace (The Would-Be Herbalist on Kindle) says: Apollinaire was certainly a unique and interesting figure. Part of the pre-World War One Paris avant-garde, precursor to the Dadaists and Surrealists, he seemed to attempt a faith in the rational as well as the irrational, in science, in progress and in humanity. His poetry seems to be a mix of a gregarious public style with flashes of introspective personal anguish. Into his future-looking verse but with its tone borrowed somewhat from Villon and Catholic litanies he introduced irrational images, arcane facts, speculations, random observations, overheard conversations, not always successfully. Actually, I was drawn initially to Apollinaire by his poetry but found in re-reading this book that the prose selections, both fiction and non-fiction, were, in a way, pleasantly surprising, pieces here and there pointing to surrealist prose and even later writers like Donald Barthelme. There is an excellent and lengthy critical introduction to Apollinaire's life and work by translator Roger Shattuck.

It is unfortunate that we must at times label our giants with little tags and thus diminish their true presence. In the case of Apollinaire, the surrealist label is presumably warranted, as the man seemed content enough with the definition. But to emphasize the surreal too much in Apollinaire's poetry is to look for the Paris cafe crowd with bizarre hats, and miss out on the melancholy wisdom of the soldier. Processions, oh, processions... Century, oh, century of clouds... Finally lies frighten me no more... My years an oh my pretty girls... All this and much more rendered in verses that follow rhyme and rhythmic structures not much more adventurous than those of the Victorians themselves.

Bought this for a friend for her birthday and I was sad when I had to box it up and Mail it. His

accounts of living in Mexico are fantastic. If you have not read him you are missing out. A real gem.

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