



## **A Tomb for Anatole: Poetry**

*Stéphane Mallarmé, Paul Auster (Translator)*

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*"One of the most moving accounts of a man trying to come to grips with modern death that is to say, death without God, death without hope of salvation and it reveals the secret meaning of Mallarme's whole aesthetic: the elevation of art to the stature of religion."* Paul Auster, from the Introduction The great French Symbolist poet Stéphane Mallarmé (1842-1898), who changed the course of modern French literature (and influenced writers from James Joyce to T.S. Eliot to Wallace Stevens), suffered many tragedies. His mother died when he was just five years old, but in 1879 the cruelest blow of all struck when his beloved son Anatole died at the age of eight. *A Tomb for Anatole* presents the 202 fragments of Mallarme's projected long poem in four parts. By far the poet's most personal work, he could never bring himself to complete it. To speak publicly of his immense sorrow, Mallarme concluded, "for me, it's not possible." Unpublished in France until 1961, these works are very far from the oblique, cool "pure poetry" Mallarme is famous for, poetry that sought to capture painstakingly *"l'absente de tous bouquets"* (the ideal flower absent from all bouquets). Paul Auster, who first published *A Tomb for Anatole* with the North Point Press in 1983 (a volume long out of print), notes in his excellent introduction that facing "the ultimate horror of every parent," these fragments "have a startling unmediated quality." As Mallarme writes, it is "a vision / endlessly purified / by my tears."

## A Tomb for Anatole: Poetry Details

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## **From Reader Review A Tomb for Anatole: Poetry for online ebook**

### **Amira Hanafi says**

This beautifully designed edition positions the original French unavoidably underneath the translation on each page. The juxtaposition is genius for Mallarme, whose poems are so utterly dependent on sound that the translations are something entirely other, and one can see & hear that clearly on each page.

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### **Derek Folder says**

really wonderful

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### **Kristjhan says**

The godless confrontation with death and the fragmentary style (although admittedly owing to its being unfinished - but that is itself the animating force of the work) make Mallarmé's collection a real anticipation of the shape of poetry to come. Honestly with how desensitized one can become to death and so many other things it takes an artwork this incredible to revive it as a resounding object of contemplation.

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### **Elizabeth says**

This is a text I read over and over again.

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### **Chasity says**

Beautiful collection of poems about group. Skillful use of language. Great model of what all can be done with form.

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### **Christopherseelie says**

A singular reading experience. It's like reading the notes on an idea, a private document, rather than "a poem". Nonetheless, there are moments of evocation so moving, so specific to grief and the vacillations between extremes...yet done with incredible absences, blanks, holes in the language where no words could enjoin the fragments, where to speak would be garrulous dramatization. And, he grapples with this problem--speaking to an unspeakable loss--while grappling with the rest of it. This is dense literature; not because of a word count or demanding historical context, because the reader has to fill in what has been passed over in silence.

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**Meghan says**

This is the most affecting book I have ever read.

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**Steven Felicelli says**

from the sophisticated aesthete - a gut wrenching homage to his dead child

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**david-baptiste says**

in many ways my favorite writing by mallarme

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**Lanny says**

Paul Auster doesn't need any extra praise from me, but this odd, sad, wonderful book of fragments is really interesting. I've been reading this off and on for about a week now.

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**Paul says**

Beautiful book that links Mallarme's anticipatory postmodernism with his latent romanticism, all in the context of grief laid bare and the need to "say."

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**Stephen says**

2.5/5 Maybe it's unfair to release unfinished fragments posthumously. Maybe it's unfair not to. I can't decide. This one leaves you wanting more. But I'll dig deeper on him. The shovel hit something solid.

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**Steven says**

Do not read these fragments in a public place. Read them in bed, under the sheets, in semi-darkness, with a pillow close to your eyes.

*Oh! you understand  
that if I consent*

*to live - to seem  
to forget you -  
it is to  
feed my pain  
- and so that this apparent  
forgetfulness  
can spring forth more  
horribly in tears, at*

*some random  
moment, in  
the middle of this  
life, when you  
appear to me.*

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### **Tosh says**

A touchy and perhaps impossible ability to grasp the fear and despair of losing someone, yet Stéphane Mallarmé through the cool eyes of using his craft or art to embrace and understand such a loss. It's a work that has a beginning but no ending. Death there is an ending but excepting or dealing with death it seems to be an open book.... for some.

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### **Carolyn says**

To watch Mallarmé drown, so willingly relinquishing to the ever-rising sea of his own hot tears. The charcoal heat rolls off the waves and blows the sulphur scent of sorrow against my cheeks. I am crying too, oh Stéphane, your Mace!

Absence and silence as literally *unthinkable* concerns; Anatole's Tomb gesturing as close to them as language will ever allow.

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