



The Poems of Octavio Paz

Octavio Paz, *Eliot Weinberger* (Translator)

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In 1990, the Swedish Academy awarded Octavio Paz the Nobel Prize in Literature for impassioned writing with wide horizons, characterized by sensuous intelligence and humanistic integrity. Paz is a writer for the entire world to celebrate (Chicago Tribune), the poet-archer who goes straight to the heart and mind, where the center of being is one (Nadine Gordimer), the living conscience of his age (Mario Vargas Llosa), a poet-prophet, a genius (Harold Bloom). Here at last is the first retrospective collection of Paz's poetry to span his entire writing career, from the first published poem, at age seventeen, to his magnificent last poem; the whole is assiduously edited and translated by acclaimed essayist Eliot Weinberger who has been translating Paz for over forty years with additional translations by several poet-luminaries. This edition includes many poems that have never been translated into English before, new translations based on Paz's final revisions, and a brilliant capsule biography of Paz by Weinberger, as well as notes on the poems in Paz's own words, taken from various interviews he gave throughout his life.

The Poems of Octavio Paz Details

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From Reader Review The Poems of Octavio Paz for online ebook

Cloud says

Tenho, por hábito, transcrever para aqui as palavras que mais tocam o meu coração. Não o consigo fazer, teria de copiar praticamente o livro todo. Fucking poetry! <3

“If a poem hasn't ripped apart your soul; you haven't experienced poetry.”

Edgar Allan Poe

Addicted to Books says

I was blown away and I fell in love!

The poetry was rich and caressed my heart!

Patricia says

Poems full of language that sings and that nudges perception out of its daily rounds. Here is a part of a favorite.

Óyeme como quien oye llover,
ni atenta ni distraída,
pasos leves, llovizna,
agua que es aire, aire que es tiempo
el día no acaba de irse,
la noche no llega todavía,
figuraciones de la niebla
al doblar la esquina,
figuraciones del tiempo
en el recodo de esta pausa,
óyeme como quien oye llover,
sin oírme, oyendo lo que digo
con los ojos abiertos hacia adentro,
dormida con los cinco sentidos despiertos,
llueve, pasos leves, rumor de sílabas,
aire y agua, palabras que no pesan:
lo que fuimos y somos,
los días y los años, este instante,
tiempo sin peso, pesadumbre enorme,

Listen to me as one listens to the rain,
not attentive, not distracted,

light footsteps, thin drizzle,
water that is air, air that is time,
the day is still leaving,
the night has yet to arrive,
figurations of mist
at the turn of the corner,
figurations of time
at the bend in this pause,
listen to me as one listens to the rain,
without listening, hear what I say
with eyes open inward, asleep
with all five senses awake,
it's raining, light footsteps, a murmur of syllables,
air and water, words with no weight:
what we are and are,
the days and years, this moment,
weightless time and heavy sorrow,

Ariel Orozco says

El viento despierta,
barre los pensamientos de mi frente
y me suspende
en la luz que sonr e para nadie:
 cu anta belleza suelta!
Oto o: entre tus manos fr as
el mundo llamea.

Laura says

~from *To Speak: To Act*,
for Roman Jakobson

I.
Between what I see and what I say,
between what I say and what I keep silent,
between what I keep silent and what I dream,
between what I dream and what I forget:
poetry.
It slips
between yes and no,
says
what I keep silent,
keeps silent
what I say,

dreams
what I forget.
It is not speech:
it is an act.
It is an act
that is speech.
Poetry
speaks and listens:
it is real.
And as soon as I say
it is real,
it vanishes.
Is it then more real?

~~~~~

from *As One Listens to the Rain*

Listen to me as one listens to the rain,  
not attentive, not distracted,  
light footsteps, thin drizzle,  
water that is air, air that is time,  
the day is still leaving,  
the night has yet to arrive,  
figurations of mist,  
at the turn of the corner,  
figurations of time,  
at the bend in this pause,  
listen to me as one listens to the rain,  
without listening, hear what I say  
with eyes open inward, asleep  
with all five senses awake,  
it's raining, light footsteps, a murmur of syllables,  
air and water, words with no weight:  
what we were and are,  
the days and years, this moment,  
weightless time and heavy sorrow,  
listen to me as one listens to the rain,

~~~~~

from *Letter of Testimony*

Cantata

Between night and day
there is an uncertain territory.
It is neither light nor shadow:
it is time.
The hour, the precarious pause,

the darkening page,
the page where I write,
slowly, these words.
The afternoon
is an ember burning itself out.
The day turns, dropping its leaves.
A dark river files
at the edges of things.
Tranquil, persistent,
it drags them along, I don't know where.
Reality drifts off.

A.M.G. says

Rating: 4 / 5

Octavio Paz has achieved a delicate balance that not many poets can say they have managed to inspire through their poetry: to *think* in order to derive meaning from something, but not *struggle* for it.

Poetry is subjective--of that I am certain. It will never mean the same thing to every person, although, for some poems, the majority will generally agree on a certain theme. Paz's poems allow for subjectivity freely, and thus is how I went about reading the poems.

For my part, I will list three that I have written an analysis on for a course, but it will only be to point out how easy they are to analyze rather than to say that they were the best poems or anything:

Nocturne
Nocturnal Water
Object Lesson

Again though, subjective interpretation is the key. There are many poems within this collection to analyze and be read at one's leisure--enjoy them as such.

Amazing Titicaca says

Great poetry book
Full of feeling and emotions.

Charlene says

Favorite:

Piedras sueltas

1

Flor

El grito, el pico, el diente, los aullidos,
la nada carnicera y su barullo,
ante esta simple flor se desvanecen.

2

Dama

Todas las noches baja al pozo
y a la mañana reaparece
con un nuevo reptil entre los brazos.

3

Biografía

No lo que pudo ser:
es lo que fue.
Y lo que fue, está muerto.

4

Campanas en la noche

Olas de sombra
mojan mi pensamiento
-y no lo apagan.

5

Ante la puerta

Gentes, palabras, gentes.
Dudé un instante:
la luna arriba, sola.

6

Visión

Me vi cerrar los ojos;
espacio, espacio
donde estoy y no estoy.

7

Paisaje

Los insectos atareados,
los caballos color de sol,

los burros color de nube,
las nubes, rocas enormes que no pesan,
los montes como cielos desplomados,
la manada de árboles bebiendo en el arroyo,
todos están ahí, dichosos en su estar,
frente a nosotros que no estamos,
comidos por la rabia, por el odio,
por el amor comidos, por la muerte.

8

Analfabeto

Alcé la cara al cielo,
Inmensa piedra de gastadas letras:
Nada me revelaron las estrellas.

P. Kubala says

Absolutely brilliant. Octavio Paz is one of the great poets of the twentieth century, in any language. He even comes close to Neruda, if that's possible. Few poets have written more beautiful verses about time. His images and metaphors leave me in stunning bewilderment.

Natasha Kaufman says

AMAZING.

Margaryta says

My high school IB history teacher was extremely passionate about history, so much that he would give out extra packages of notes on various events and figures associated with the time period we were studying that we most likely didn't need to know. I remember Octavio Paz figuring in one of them, and remember hearing our teacher praise him as a poet all of us should read at least once in our lives. When my university professor spent half a class talking about Paz and how he related to Mexican history, talking as well about his father, the famous diplomat, and other figures like Pancho Villa and Madeiro, I was the only one in class who knew who and what he was talking about. I was extremely glad to finally be giving Paz's work a read, and hoped I would be as impressed as my history teacher promise.

And indeed I was. Although I had to read large, though still selective, chunks of poems from the book, I felt I got a good sense of where Paz was coming from, how he wrote, and what he focused on. There is an incredibly soothing feeling to his poems, even when they take a turn for the bittersweet and sometimes even terrifying. He really is a word master. The stars, sun, and moon always find their way into his poems, as well as the irresistibly romantic and sensual way in which he talks about women. "A Tale of Two Gardens" was particularly worth mentioning in that regard. Sometimes the thread of thought got lost behind the beautiful writing, while at other times the mass of references would become slightly overbearing due to lack of

knowledge, but even in these cases, a couple extra reads always helped. Even if I still didn't understand everything Paz was referring to or talking about, the melodic hum of his words got to me every time.

Paz deserves all the praise he gets, and is worth studying today, tomorrow, and for years to come. There is a timeless quality to his work, as well as strong, focus referrals to historical events and various figures, both real and not. This collection works well as both an introduction to his work as well as serving as a general collection to a reader who is familiar with the work already. I will probably be referring to this specific version again in the future when I'll be revisiting Paz's work.
