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Death Poems



Synopsis

Death Poems by Thomas Ligotti, with a whole new section of poetry titled "Closing Statements".

Cover art and internal illustrations by the amazing Richard A. Kirk. Long out of print, Death Poems was originally produced in a very small edition by Durtro in 2004. This highly prized collection has been virtually unobtainable until now.

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Customer Reviews

I remember when Thomas Ligotti's slim collection of "Death Poems" were released from Durtro in 2005 (I think). They met with a surprisingly nettlesome critical appraisal. Re-reading them, I can only believe that this was a result of a primarily Western readership, as most of Ligotti's poems are fashioned after Japanese Zen poetry, particularly by Japanese Zen poets who were just on the verge of dying. What makes these poems powerful are two elements: first, the underlying fear of death or oblivion that all of us possess somewhere in our psyche, and the razorlike simplicity he employs in driving that home. He's not taking cues from Keats or Shelley or anyone who is

contemplating beauty or ideas. The artwork on the book's cover by Richard A. Kirk is exactly fitting for what the author is doing: turning the skull around, letting the proverbial wolf in the door. Only in "Closing Statements" is there really even a trace of what one can call sentiment, though there is definitely an element of empathy for the perceived constant suffering of the human condition. Unlike his otherwise perfect poetic companion Joseph Payne Brennan, Ligotti has no interest in talking about his life specifically or his experiences. His sole subject is mortality. My personal favorite has always been the following, because he uses an imagistic poetic device to truly terrifying effect: "Memories" Countless memories are stored in your brain. Sometimes they rise up again and again. Sometimes they just stay deep in the fleshy darkness. Eventually you yourself become only a memory that either rises up again and again or remains deep in the brains of another.

What happens with most poetry collections, in my experience, is you get dealt a 'hit or miss' type of situation. In other words for example: You'll read one poem in collection that makes, 'good sense.' It has a point to it, perhaps! And it seems to adhere to a logic, worth following. Then, as some might say, 'the nightmare begins.' As that single, comprehensible poem will more oft than not, be followed by a handful of others that seem untenable, beyond the grasp of any known logic - even, 'annoyingly complex.' Not the case, with Death Poems. As each piece in the collection adheres to a logic that's, I'd say, 'well worth following.' Each is simple, easy to grasp, intellectually speaking. Each is enjoyable in own, special way (though it helps if you're not offended I'd say, by 'disturbing material'). And some, in fact, are characterized by a narrator/protagonist alteration or 'movement in character,' normally associated with a short story - even a novella. Thus, if you've NEVER liked poetry? Fear not! As there are 'all-out,' well developed, 'full-blown' stories to be had here. And they can be easily 'grasped!' Examples? 'The Note.' In which protagonist resists the notion that society's 'marvel' at alleged 'beautiful universe,' is worthy of admiration. 'Premature,' in which narrator contends, there is an innate fallacy to notion that one can die, 'before his time.' This poem portrays - very well - a conflict between narrator's opinion and as Thoreau might say, that of the 'mass of Man.' Good stuff, well developed, to put it mildly. And 'Writing Home.' In which narrator makes case to parents, he'd rather not have been born. Yet at poem's conclusion?

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