



## Winter Garden

*Pablo Neruda , William O'Daly (Translator)*

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## **Winter Garden** Pablo Neruda , William O'Daly (Translator)

Facing death from cancer, Neruda wrote no book more direct and passionate in its language, and this translation—the first time these poems appeared in English—was cited by *Bloomsbury Review* as a Book of the Year and called one of the "most valuable Neruda books we have today." In this lyrical suite, the poet meditates on his imminent death, embraces solitude, and returns to nature as a source of regeneration. Bilingual with introduction.

## **Winter Garden Details**

Date : Published January 1st 2002 by Copper Canyon Press (first published January 1st 1974)

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Author : Pablo Neruda , William O'Daly (Translator)

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## From Reader Review Winter Garden for online ebook

### Brendon says

This collection of poetry was one of the eight unpublished manuscripts found in Pablo Neruda's home after he passed away in 1973. I have mixed feelings about manuscripts published posthumously. Were we (the public) ever suppose to see these writings? Were these writings so private Neruda never planned to share them? These are questions we will never have the answers to but we do have wide access to these manuscripts. I read this collection of poetry almost exactly two years ago when I still lived in Seattle, WA. Now living near Boston, MA, I picked up this collection of poetry, both in English and in Spanish (side by side) to experience the intimate words of Neruda, as he talks about love, solitude, nature, politics, passions, and home. As with any translation, I am skeptical that the true feeling and meaning made it through the translation process – in particular poetry. Despite what might have been lost, *Winter Garden* is a beautiful collection, full of deep and meaningful poems. I found it challenging to write about the entire collection and I have finally landed on talking briefly about the poems that stood out to me.

The collection opens with *The Egoist*. As one of the longer poems in the collection, Neruda talks about (in my interpretation) isolation in terms of a garden and of winter. He asks powerful questions like, "What can I do if...the thorn guided me to the pain of so many others?" and "Should I beg forgiveness for this winter?" For me, this framed where Neruda was coming from when writing these poems and invites the reader in the share in his experiences and to struggle with the same questions.

#### *Guatama Christ*

This poem was the next in the collection that I found powerful. In this poem, Neruda talks of religion and atrocities. To me, it seems like Neruda was writing about how the names of the saviors have been used and overused and leaned upon and not fully understood. Yet, those names are still revered and still lifted up.

#### *The Ocean Calls*

The ocean was a common theme in Neruda's work. In this poem, he uses the ocean as a metaphor for liberation and talks about his current state about being a shut in and not being able to visit the ocean in his motherland. When reading this poem, it seems to me he was far away from home without a means to come back (most likely in France). Neruda even talks about the sea where he is as the "unknown sea," but it is not the same for him. I think the metaphor is a powerful one, exploring the depths of liberation and home.

#### *Bird*

This poem made me laugh. An elegant bird in Normandy discovers Neruda and is enamored, scared, nervous, and questioning about what this gigantic creature is. The bird is determined to figure out this mystery which is Neruda, until the bird sees a grain or worm and hops away, abandoning the mystery of this human. This poem had a different feel and stood out to me, not just as an observation of a bird, but as a statement about abandoning the questioning of mysteries.

#### *A Dog Has Died*

This poem on the surface is about Neruda's dog who passed away. Neruda writes from a place of reflection about his dog's life and also from the inevitability of death. The poem is not about grief but about a celebration of life for a companion that served Neruda unconditionally. Neruda ends the poem with a direct statement of finality: "He has gone and I buried him, and that was all."

Finally the collection closes with *The Star*. In my opinion, this was the perfect short poem to provide closure. Powerful, layered with meaning, using the ocean and coast as powerful metaphors. After I finished *The Star*, I felt a sense of loss but also peace. Overall, I thought Pablo Neruda's writing was abstracted, relying on





## Ahmad Sharabiani says

El jardín del invierno = Winter Garden (Copper Canyon Press, 1987, 2002) (translated by James Nolan), Pablo Neruda

Pablo Neruda was the pen name and, later, legal name of the Chilean poet-diplomat and politician Ricardo Eliécer Neftalí Reyes Basoalto (July 12, 1904 – September 23, 1973). He derived his pen name from the Czech poet Jan Neruda. Pablo Neruda won the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1971.

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## Sara says

I am not a big fan of poetry. My book club challenge was to read a poem. I did enjoy it, just not my style of reading. I thought it was interesting that the longest poem was about his dead dog.

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## Nathan Albright says

I am no stranger to reading poems [1], and this is the second book of the poet's that I have read. This particular book was posthumously published from a written manuscript of the poet's after he died of cancer as his nation's leftist government was soon to be overthrown. Given that the poet was Chile's ambassador to France at the time, and was in exile from his beloved Isla Negra, this book is taken as a book that expresses a feeling of exile and silence and an awareness of his approaching death. It is therefore an instructive case of what a poet thinks about and reflects about as the time of his end rapidly approaches. Most writers can be expected to show their natures in the face of death, and this book has a feeling of late autumn and approaching winter that shows the author bravely facing his death and demise, if without as much hope as one would expect. There is a genuine sense of beauty and melancholy with these works, and that makes this a decent book of poetry to read, despite the gulf that separates the worldview of the author and I on a great many subjects.

This particular book is a short one written as a diglot with the poet's native Chilean Spanish on the left and the English translation on the right. Overall there are twenty poems that take up about 70 pages or so. As might be expected for a poet who felt most at home on a quiet and somewhat remote island, a great deal of this poem reflects on nature--the ocean, birch trees, a beloved but dead dog that is dealt with strikingly unsentimentally, as well as images of forests and the titular winter garden. Even when the author talks about something as joyful as homecoming he strikes a mournful tone: "I am a man of so many homecomings / that form a cluster of betrayals / and again, I leave on a frightening voyage / in which I travel and never arrive anywhere: / my single journey is a homecoming (41)." These are not happy poems, and the author appears to write them without any sort of hope in an afterlife or a better life afterwards. He even seems to anticipate that his death will be a time of eating because of the various organisms that will feed off of his decaying body. It is an altogether gloomy and dark collection of works.

Of course, Pablo Neruda being who he is, he could not resist a few political comments that detract from the quality of this work because they remind the reader that the poet has an uncongenial political worldview, as when he speaks about Nixon and shows his spleen. One wonders whether the poet, and those who publish and market his works, are aware that not everyone is friendly to the leftist viewpoint of the author and who find the poet's stridency off-putting. Perhaps people are used to being in an echo chamber where they do not have to face the withering criticism of those who have different views of the world and for whom a poet like this can be enjoyed and appreciated only with a sense of caution and wariness because of the awareness that the poetical and the political are never too far apart when it comes to many writers, myself included. As this writer is one whose political viewpoint is unworthy of a great deal of respect or praise, and as he appears to have no faith in resurrection or a better world to come, this book is a gloomy example of the poetry of those who write without hope.

[1] See, for example:

<https://edgeinducedcohesion.blog/2017...>

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## **Elaine says**

Pablo Neruda is one of my favorite poets of all time, and there were many lines in 'Winter Garden' that imprinted onto my memory:

From the titular poem, 'Winter Garden:'

"Winter arrives ... I am a book of snow, a spacious hand, an open meadow, a circle that waits, I belong to the earth and its winter ... I knew the rose would fall and the pit of the passing peach would sleep and germinate once more, and I got drunk on the air until the whole sea became the night and the red sky turned to ash ... Now the earth lives numbing its oldest questions, the skin of its silence stretched out. Once more I am the silent one who came out of the distance wrapped in cold rain and bells: I owe to earth's pure death the will to sprout."

There's one that is beyond perfect for any time you need to offer a sincere apology: "Many Thanks," which ends with, "With these excuses for my absence I beg forgiveness for my ways."

And there's one that would be beautiful to read at the small funeral service of a beloved pet dog: "A Dog Has Died," which ends with, "He has gone and I buried him, and that was all."



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**peiman-mir5 rezakhani says**

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### Sarah Karimia says

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"I didn't have enough time or ink for everyone....I didn't decipher it, I couldn't grasp each and every meaning: I ask forgiveness from anyone not here."

The most poignant poem of all is "In Memory of Manuel and Benjamin", two close friends of his, who unimaginably die on the same day by accidents. Neruda is genuinely perplexed at the loss: both were friends but they couldn't have been more different and while words were his voice, he finds it difficult to compose anything to make sense of it:

I loved my two contrary friends  
who, with their silence, left me speechless  
without knowing what to think or say.  
So much searching under the skin  
and so much walking among souls and roots  
hour by hour so much pecking at paper.

Even if they didn't have the time to grow tired,  
now quiet and finally solemn,  
they enter, pressed together, the vast silence  
that will slowly grind down their frames.

Tears were never invented for those men.

Given his impending death, late in life, it's easy to see how pained Neruda was. This collection features many personal thoughts, among them his eager wish not to be praised or to receive accolades in his late days. He wants to watch water through windows and see the sunrise. He's gracious and brave.

This book is part of a series by Copper Canyon Press of Neruda's works, translated by O'Daly from the Spanish (which is still featured in the left facing pages).

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