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Poems: The Weight of Oranges, Miner's Pond, Skin Divers

By Anne Michaels



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Prior to her stunning first novel, **Fugitive Pieces**, Anne Michaels had already won awards and critical acclaim for two books of poetry: **The Weight of Oranges** (1986), which won the Commonwealth Prize for the Americas, and **Miner's Pond** (1991), which received the Canadian Authors Association Award and was short-listed for the Governor General's Award and the Trillium Award. Although they were published separately, these two books, along with **Skin Divers**, a collection of Michaels's newest work, were written as companion volumes.

Poems brings all three books together for the first time, creating for American readers a wonderful introduction to Anne Michaels's poetry. Meditative and insightful, powerful and heart-moving, these are poems that, as Michael Ondaatje has written, "go way beyond games or fashion or politics . . . They represent the human being entire."



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Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

Three collections of poems by novelist Michaels (*Fugitive Pieces*) have been brought together for their first U.S. publication: *The Weight of Oranges*, *Miner's Pond* and *Skin Divers*. As the sensuousness of these titles suggests, Michaels goes for a portentous lyric well-stocked with physical details, action verbs, simile and metaphor--"we are black smudges on the frozen river"; "We were sent for a reason,/ like curtains blown in from an open window/ to knock over a cup." When she writes from a perspective one assumes to be her own ("*Miner's Pond*"; "*Words for the Body*"), Michaels's lush and elliptical narratives are winning. Increasingly, her poems take historical figures and their lovers as subjects and speakers, echoing her work in historical fiction, and including Alfred Doblin, Johannes Kepler, Karen Blixen, Amedeo Modigliani, Anna Akhmatova and Marie Curie. These poems don't always carry the freight of their subjects' fame lightly, though, and by the book's second half the metaphors begin to misfire as bad homages, as in the Akhmatovesque "Birds plunge their cries like needles/ into the thick arm of afternoon." The worst merely recap generic moments of pathos in a tone more borrowed from biography than reanimated by sympathy. Fans of fellow Canadian and Knopf novelist-poet Michael Ondaatje may find much to admire here though, and the better poems should find a significant audience. (Jan.)

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From Library Journal

It's no surprise that the author of the richly evocative novel *Fugitive Pieces* is also a poet. Michaels had, in fact, published two collections of poetry in her native Canada before that novel gained recognition in the United States. Both of these collections, along with a third, newer one, are included in *Poems*. A poet of unabashedly Romantic predilections, Michaels creates dreamscapes that frequently draw on the staples of 1960s "Deep Image" poetry: light, the moon, stars, the sea. But she takes pains to imagine a corresponding physicality or consciousness that lives within the vocabulary of her moonlit surroundings: "Waterworn, the body remembers/ like a floodplain, sentiment-laden,/ reclaims itself with every tide." Objects of perception are internalized and integrated with the subject: "Like the moon, I want to touch places/ just by looking." In quantity, though, this assimilative method grows somewhat thick, if not awkward, and the most striking passages are more often direct ("If you love a man who's not your husband,/ your life becomes the story everyone else tells") than willfully "poetic." Recommended for large collections.

-Fred Muratori, *Cornell Univ. Lib., Ithaca, NY*

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From Kirkus Reviews

Michaels, whose first novel (*Fugitive Pieces*, 1997) was published to considerable literary acclaim, couples profound intellect with deeply felt emotion in a volume that includes two award-winning collections of poems previously published only in Canada (*The Weight of Oranges*, 1986; and *Miner's Pond*, 1991), along with new work, *Skin Divers*. The earlier volume is more personal than the rest of the book: While its poems show less finesse in the authors overuse of clichéd imagery like bones and stones, they set forth the themes of time, memory, and loss that continue to obsess Michaels in her later poems. If, for the Michaels of *The Weight of Oranges*, Memory wraps us / like the shell wraps the sea, by the time of *Miner's Pond* memory requires form. In the near-monumental *What The Light Teaches*, Michaels states what may be the whole volume's central thesis: Language remembers. What distinguishes the author and raises her above many of her peers is the way her personal life informs but never overwhelms her poems, while her intellectual ardor for language and formal thought only occasionally distances her (and the reader) from feeling. As she says in

Words For The Body, one of many of her poems in which art embraces human experience, No words mean as much as life. These are ambitious poems, often narrative, often in the voice of others, often written to an absent you. They are almost all love poems, and the love expressed whether for lover, friend, sibling, parent, or child is unabashedly passionate and ultimately optimistic. Michaels is wrestling with the way that love survives despite separation, even death. There may be loss and longing but never diminishment of love. With the exception of some narratives that flatten into literalness: a volume of intensely felt emotional truth, strengthened by intellectual rigor and haunting imagery. -- Copyright ©2000, Kirkus Associates, LP. All rights reserved.

Users Review

From reader reviews:

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Albert Guerra:

This Poems: The Weight of Oranges, Miner's Pond, Skin Divers is completely new way for you who has curiosity to look for some information as it relief your hunger of information. Getting deeper you in it getting knowledge more you know or you who still having little bit of digest in reading this Poems: The Weight of Oranges, Miner's Pond, Skin Divers can be the light food for yourself because the information inside this book is easy to get simply by anyone. These books produce itself in the form which can be reachable by anyone, yep I mean in the e-book type. People who think that in e-book form make them feel drowsy even dizzy this e-book is the answer. So there is no in reading a e-book especially this one. You can find what you are looking for. It should be here for an individual. So , don't miss this! Just read this e-book sort for your better life and also knowledge.

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