

The learned man and the poet,
the scholar, the writer, the lover,
the maniac and the man who dreams the destruction of our
 perverse reality,
they fight like dogs over the bones of your work.
You who stood against all of them,
you are today a name, a leader, a banner.

Bending over life like Saturn over his sons
you scan with your steady look of love
the whitened ridges left by semen, blood, lava.
These bodies, face to face like blazing stars,
are made of the same substance as the suns.
We call this love or death; liberty or doom.
Is it catastrophe? Is it the grave of man?
Where is the borderline between spasm and earthquake,
eruption and coitus?

Prisoner in your castle of crystal of rock
you pass through dungeons, chambers and galleries,
enormous courts whose vines twist on sunny pillars,
seductive graveyards where the still black poplars dance.
Walls, things, bodies, reflecting you.
All is mirror!
Your image persecutes you.

Man is inhabited by silence and by space.
How can this hunger be met and satisfied?
How can you still the silence? How can the void be peopled?
How can my image ever be escaped?

Only in my likeness can I transcend myself
the other's existence affirmed by his blood alone.
Justine is alive only through Juliette,
the victims breed their executioners.
This body which today we sacrifice,
is it not the god who tomorrow will sacrifice?

Imagination is desire's spur,
territory is endless, infinite as boredom.
its opposite and twin.
Pleasure or death, vomit or flooding in,
autumn, resembling the going down of day,
sex or volcano,
a gust of wind, summer that sets the fields on fire,
eye-teeth or stars,
the stony hair of dread,
red foam of desire, slaughter on the high seas,
and the blue rocks of delirium,
forms, images, gurgles, and the rage for life,
eternities in flashes,
excesses: your measure of a man.
Now dare:
freedom is willingness toward necessity.
Be the arrow, the bow, the chord and the cry.
Dream is explosive. It bursts. Become again sun.
In your diamond castle, your image destroys itself, remakes
itself, tireless.

Octavio Paz

The Prisoner (Homage to D.A.F. DeSade)
From Early Poems 1935-1955 A New Directions Book.