

## News of the Earth

**Homero Aridjis**

**Betty Ferber, Translator**

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Homero Aridjis's *News of the Earth*, translated and edited by Betty Ferber, showcases the range of talent of the Mexican poet and environmental activist. Billed as "a biography of Aridjis's relationship with the natural world," the book chronicles his earnest, lifelong defense of the endangered species and ecosystems in Mexico and across Latin America.

*News of the Earth* is sprawling, collecting op-ed pieces, poems, and official declarations from the Group of 100, which Aridjis founded. This group of Latin American artists and intellectuals dedicated to environmental advocacy includes Gabriel Garcia Marquez and Octavio Paz. They have advocated on behalf of the monarch butterfly, forests, sea turtles, the atmosphere, and beyond.

Wide-ranging subjects include overpopulation, river pollution, and the destruction of the Lacandon jungle. Battalions of facts and figures buttress points from sources including government agencies, Yale experts, and John Steinbeck.

Aridjis takes a philosophical approach to advocacy, examining big questions such as humanity's role in the world. Portions of the work are cynical, as when it describes "the Mexican phenomenon of murder victims but no murderers," but it's never militant. Well-reasoned arguments are laid out matter-of-factly.

Though sometimes bogged down in statistics, essays display the same degree of craftsmanship as the collection's well-wrought poems. Prose sparkles with passion and lapidary finesse. Articles are sprinkled with personal observations, such as how Monarch butterflies, now increasingly rare, once filled the streets in winter. The book would obviously appeal to environmentalists, but also has broader literary merits and serves as a captivating historical account of the conservationist movement.

*News of the Earth* is a thoughtful, engaging work about a man of great conscience, concerned with nothing less than the fate of the planet.

JOSEPH S. PETE (January/February 2018)

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