



Nights in the Gardens of Brooklyn (New York Review Books Classics)

By Harvey Swados

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Nights in the Gardens of Brooklyn (New York Review Books Classics) By Harvey Swados

There was a time when New York was everything to me: my mother, my mistress, my Mecca, when I could no more have wanted to live any place else than I could have conceived of myself as a daddy, disciplining my boy and dandling my daughter.

So begins "Nights in the Gardens of Brooklyn", which gives its title to Harvey Swados's collected stories. In this beautiful and heartbreaking novella, Swados describes a generation "afame with romance and disillusion," in search of pleasures and answers, and shows how the demands of love and life temper its hopes and fears. It is a perennial story, told by Swados in straightforward and lyrical prose and with tremendous sympathy, and without doubt one of the most enduring achievements of postwar American fiction.

Harvey Swados's many splendid stories speak of work, friendship, and family. They are about the common world, as well as the final loneliness from which the common world cannot protect us. And yet Swados, as Richard Gilman has written, was above all concerned with "the breakthrough into true feeling, the attainment of moral dignity, and the linking up with others through compassion."

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Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

The plain, unadorned style in which the 21 collected stories of the late Harvey Swados (1920-1972) are cast can be considered a reflection of his distinctive qualities of integrity, moral seriousness, forthrightness and absence of "literary" airs. The joking title of the lead story is no joke: he was quintessentially a New York writer, even in those tales set in foreign countries. His sensibility bore the marks of the city; the pervasive ideas and sympathies, political and social, recall the best aspects of the postwar years. To love the city in that enchanted way—"my mother, my mistress, my Mecca"—it is best to arrive there from elsewhere, as Swados's characters do (as he himself did from Buffalo), their heads filled with dreams of art, the bohemian life, high ideals and illusions. Together with stories featuring writers and other artists, Swados's fiction also evokes drab, working-class lives. Decades after they were written, the better tales in this memorial collection retain much of their original vigor, feeling and trenchancy.

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Review

"Swados has a fine comic sense of our epoch's major poses and masquerades, and his work is armed with an exact contemporary wit whose targets are pretension, blindness, and non—life...But more than that he is concerned with the break—through into true feeling, the attainment of moral dignity and the linking up with others through compassion, and that is where his best achievement lies."

— *Commonweal*

"The deep feeling and giftedness of Harvey Swados shine through these stories...He stunningly captures time, place, and person."

— Studs Terkel

"Harvey Swados was a writer who stood apart from the prevailing fashions of his time. As a novelist and short—story writer...he took the social unit—the family and the factory, the intellectual community and the unions, and the larger social mass from which they derived—as his special field of inquiry, and there were years at a time when he was virtually alone among the writers of his generation in lavishing his extraordinary empathy and intelligence on such subjects."

— Hilton Kramer, *The New York Times Book Review*

"A stalwart literary craftsman of the realistic school, Swados wrote a number of novels, short stories and books of literary and political comment and then died, in his fifties, without ever attaining the critical acceptance, indeed acclaim, that he deserved."

— Margaret Manning, *The Boston Globe*

"Swados's people are soldiers and lovers, runaway fathers, failed artists, innocents at home and abroad. *Nights in the Gardens of Brooklyn* is that rarest sort of book — the necessary one."

— Brett Singer, *Los Angeles Times Book Review*

About the Author

Harvey Swados (1920–1972) was born in Buffalo, the son of a doctor. A graduate of the University of Michigan, he served in the Merchant Marine during World War II and published his first novel, *Out Went the Candle*, in 1955. His other books include the novels *Standing Fast* and *Celebration*; a group of stories set in

an auto plant, *On the Line*, widely regarded as a classic of the literature of work; and various collections of nonfiction, including *A Radical's America*. Swados's 1959 essay for *Esquire*, "Why Resign from the Human Race?," has often been said to have inspired the formation of the Peace Corps.

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