

SZYMBORSKA – wybór wierszy do recytacji (LO Nr I Wrocław)

1)

First Love

*They say
the first love's most important.
That's very romantic,
but not my experience.*

*Something was and wasn't there between us,
something went on and went away.*

*My hands never tremble
when I stumble on silly keepsakes
and a sheaf of letters tied with string
— not even ribbon.*

*Our only meeting after years:
two chairs chatting
at a chilly table.*

*Other loves
still breathe deep inside me.
This one's too short of breath even to sigh.*

*Yet just exactly as it is,
it does what the others still can't manage:
unremembered,
not even seen in dreams,
it introduces me to death.*

Translated from the Polish by Clare Cavanagh and Stanislaw Baranczak

2)

A memory

*We were chatting
and suddenly stopped short.
A beautiful girl stepped onto the terrace,
so beautiful,
too beautiful
for us to enjoy our vacation.*

*Basia shot her husband a panicky look.
Krystyna took Zbyszek's hand
reflexively.
I thought: I'll call you,
tell you, don't come just yet,
they're predicting rain for days.*

*Only Agnieszka, a widow,
met the lovely girl with a smile.*

3)

Photograph from September 11

*They jumped from the burning floors –
one, two, a few more,
higher, lower.
The photograph halted them in life,
and now keeps them
above the earth toward the earth.
Each is still complete,
with a particular face
and blood well-hidden.
There's enough time
for hair to come loose,
for keys and coins
to fall from pockets.
They're still within the air's reach,
within the compass of places
that have just now opened.
I can do only two things for them –
describe this flight
and not add a last line.*

4)

A Note

*Life is the only way
to get covered in leaves,
catch your breath on the sand,
rise on wings;*

*to be a dog,
or stroke its warm fur;*

*to tell pain
from everything it's not;*

*to squeeze inside events,
dawdle in views,
to seek the least of all possible mistakes.*

*An extraordinary chance
to remember for a moment
a conversation held
with the lamp switched off;*

*and if only once
to stumble upon a stone,
end up soaked in one downpour or another,*

*mislaid your keys in the grass;
and to follow a spark on the wind with your eyes;
and to keep on not knowing
something important.*

(*Monologue of a Dog*, translated by S. Baranczak and C. Cavanagh)

5)

DIVORCE

*For the kids the first ending of the world.
For the cat a new master.
For the dog a new mistress.
For the furniture stairs, thuds, my way or the highway.
For the walls bright squares where pictures once hung.
For the neighbors new subjects, a break in the boredom.
For the car better if there were two.
For the novels, the poems--fine, take what you want.
Worse with encyclopedias and VCRs,
not to mention the guide to proper usage,
which doubtless holds pointers on two names--
are they still linked with the conjunction "and"
or does a period divide them.*

6)

Ella in Heaven

*She prayed to God
with all her heart
to make her
a happy white girl.
And if it's too late for such changes,
then at least, Lord God, see what I weigh,
subtract at least half of me.
But the good God answered No.
He just put his hand on her heart,
checked her throat, stroked her head.
But when everything is over – he added -
you'll give me joy by coming to me,
my black comfort, my well-sung stump.*

7)

ASSASSINS

*They think for days on end,
how to kill so as to kill,
and how many killed will be many.
Apart from this they eat their meals with gusto,
pray, wash their feet, feed the birds,
make phone calls while scratching their armpits,
stanch blood when they cut a finger,
if they're women they buy sanitary napkins,
eye-shadow, flowers for vases,
they make jokes on their good days,
drink citrus juice from the fridge,
watch the moon and stars at night,
place headphones with soft music on their ears
and sleep sweetly till the crack of dawn
— unless what they're thinking needs doing at night.*

8)

Metaphysics

It's been and gone.
It's been, so it's gone.
In the same irreversible order,
for such is the rule of this foregone game.
A trite conclusion, not worth writing
if it weren't an unquestionable fact,
a fact for ever and ever,
for the whole cosmos, as it is and will be,
that something really was
until it was gone,
even the fact
that today you had a side of fries.

9) EPITAPH – dwie wersje

Epitaph

*Here lies, oldfashioned as parentheses,
the authoress of verse. Eternal rest
was granted her by earth, although the corpse
had failed to join the avant-garde, of course.
The plain grave? There's poetic justice in it,
this ditty-dirge, the owl, the meek cornflower
Passerby, take your PC out, press "POWER,"
think on Szyborska's fate for half a minute"*

(translated by Baranczak and Cavanaugh).

Lub inne tłumaczenie:

EPITAPH

*Here lies, like an apostrophe outdated
one who had penned few poems. The deceased
rests in peace, though she was not incorporated
in any literary group, clique or list.
There is nothing more on this grave, so bare
than an owl, a thyme and this rhyme
passerby, your Thinkpad prepare
and of Szyborska's fate think for some time.*

Translated by Michael Handelzalts in Haaretz

10)

On the Banks of the Styx

*Dear individual soul, this is the Styx.
The Styx, that's right. Why are you so perplexed?
As soon as Charon reads the prepared text
over the speakers, let the nymphs affix
your name badge and transport you to the banks.
(The nymphs? They fled your woods and joined the ranks
of personnel here.) Floodlights will reveal
piers built of reinforced concrete and steel
and hovercrafts whose beelike sound resounds
where Charon used to ply his wooden oar.
Mankind has multiplied, has burst its bounds;
nothing, sweet soul, is as it was before.
Skyscrapers, solid waste and dirty air:
the scenery's been harmed beyond repair
Safe and efficient transportation (millions
of souls served here, all races, creeds and sexes)
requires urban planning: hence pavilions
warehouses, dry docks and office complexes.
Among the gods, it's Hermes, my dear soul,
who makes all prophecies and estimations
when wars and revolutions take their toll -
our boats, of course, require reservations.
A one-way trip across the Styx is free:
the meters saying, "No Canadian dimes,
no tokens" are left standing, as you see
but only to remind us of old times
From Section Tau Four of the Alpha Pier
you're boarding hovercraft Sigma Sixteen -
it's packed with sweating souls, but in the rear
you'll find a seat (I've got it on my screen)
Now Tartarus (let me pull up the file)
is overbooked, too - no way we could stretch it
Cramped, crumpled souls all dying to get out
one last half drop of Lethe in my phial...
Not faith in the beyond, but only doubt
can make you, sorry soul, a bit less wretched.*

Translation by Stanislaw Baranczak and Clare Cavanagh

11)

Some like poetry

Some--

that means not all.

Not even the majority of all but the minority.

Not counting the schools, where one must,

and the poets themselves, there will be perhaps two in a thousand.

Like--

but one also likes chicken noodle soup,

one likes compliments and the color blue, one likes an old scarf,

one likes to prove one's point,

one likes to pet a dog.

Poetry--

but what sort of thing is poetry?

More than one shaky answer

has been given to this question.

But I do not know and do not know and clutch on to it,

as to a saving bannister.

Nothing Twice

*Nothing can ever happen twice.
In consequence, the sorry fact is
that we arrive here improvised
and leave without the chance to practice.*

*Even if there is no one dumber,
if you're the planet's biggest dunce,
you can't repeat the class in summer:
this course is only offered once.*

*No day copies yesterday,
no two nights will teach what bliss is
in precisely the same way,
with precisely the same kisses.*

*One day, perhaps some idle tongue
mentions your name by accident:
I feel as if a rose were flung
into the room, all hue and scent.*

*The next day, though you're here with me,
I can't help looking at the clock:
A rose? A rose? What could that be?
Is it a flower or a rock?*

*Why do we treat the fleeting day
with so much needless fear and sorrow?
It's in its nature not to stay:
Today is always gone tomorrow.*

*With smiles and kisses, we prefer
to seek accord beneath our star,
although we're different (we concur)
just as two drops of water are.*

Translated by Clare Cavanagh and Stanislaw Baranczak

13)

Poetry Reading

*To be a boxer, or not to be there
at all. O Muse, where are our teeming crowds?
Twelve people in the room, eight seats to spare
it's time to start this cultural affair.
Half came inside because it started raining,
the rest are relatives. O Muse.*

*The women here would love to rant and rave,
but that's for boxing. Here they must behave.
Dante's Infemo is ringside nowadays.
Likewise his Paradise. O Muse.*

*Oh, not to be a boxer but a poet,
one sentenced to hard shelleying for life,
for lack of muscles forced to show the world
the sonnet that may make the high-school reading lists
with luck. O Muse,
O bobtailed angel, Pegasus.*

*In the first row, a sweet old man's soft snore:
he dreams his wife's alive again. What's more,
she's making him that tart she used to bake.
Aflame, but carefully-don't burn his cake!
we start to read. O Muse.*

Translated by Stanislaw Baranczak and Clare Cavanagh

14)

Cat in an empty apartment

*Dying--you wouldn't do that to a cat.
For what is a cat to do
in an empty apartment?
Climb up the walls?
Brush up against the furniture?
Nothing here seems changed,
and yet something has changed.
Nothing has been moved,
and yet there's more room.
And in the evenings the lamp is not on.*

*One hears footsteps on the stairs,
but they're not the same.
Neither is the hand
that puts a fish on the plate.*

*Something here isn't starting
at its usual time.
Something here isn't happening
as it should.
Somebody has been here and has been,
and then has suddenly disappeared
and now is stubbornly absent.*

*All the closets have been scanned
and all the shelves run through.
Slipping under the carpet and checking came to nothing.
The rule has even been broken and all the papers scattered.
What else is there to do?
Sleep and wait.*

*Just let him come back,
let him show up.
Then he'll find out
that you don't do that to a cat.
Going toward him
faking reluctance,
slowly,
on very offended paws.
And no jumping, purring at first.*

Transl. by Joanna Trezeciak

15)

A LITTLE GIRL TUGS AT THE TABLECLOTH

*She's been in this world for over a year,
and in this world not everything's been examined
and taken in hand.*

*The subject of today's investigation
is things that don't move themselves.*

*They need to be helped along,
shoved, shifted,
taken from their pace and relocated.*

*They don't all want to go, e.g., the bookshelf,
the cupboard, the unyielding walls, the table.*

*But the tablecloth on the stubborn table
- when well-seized by its hems -
manifests a willingness to travel.*

*And the glasses, plates,
creamer, spoons, bowl,
are fairly shaking with desire.*

*It's fascinating,
what form of motion will they take,
once they're trembling on the brink:
will they roam across the ceiling?
fly around the lamp?
hop onto the windowsill and from there to a tree?*

*Mr. Newton still has no say in this.
Let him look down from the heavens and wave his hands.*

*This experiment must be completed.
And it will.*

Translated by Clare Cavanagh and Stanisław Barańczak