

## "Żurawie" (*The Cranes*) by Sienkiewicz

"Homesickness (nostalgia) tortures mainly people who for various reasons are utterly unable to return to their own country, but even those for whom return is merely a question of will power feel its attacks sometimes. The cause may be anything: a sunrise or a sunset which calls to mind a dawn or an evening at home, some note of a foreign song in which the rhythm of one's own country is heard, some group of trees which call to mind remotely the native village--anything suffices!"

*"Tęsknica (nostalgia) toczy przeważnie ludzi, którzy z jakichkolwiek powodów nie mogą wcale powrócić do kraju; niemniej jednak i ci, dla których powrót jest tylko rzeczą woli, doznają czasem jej napadów. Powód może być byle jaki: wschód lub zachód słońca, który przypomni zorze ojczyste, jakaś nuta obcej pieśni, w której odezwie się rytm swojski, jakaś kępa drzew, przypominająca z dala wioskę rodzinną - wszystko wystarcza! Wówczas ogarnia serce ogromna, nieprzeparta tęsknota i przychodzi nagle poczucie, że się jest jakby liściem oderwanym od dalekiego, a kochanego drzewa. I w takich chwilach człowiek albo musi wracać, albo jeśli ma trochę wyobraźni - tworzyć."*

## The Envoy of Mr. Cogito by Zbigniew Herbert, translated by Bogdana and John Carpenter.

Go where those others went to the dark boundary  
for the golden fleece of nothingness your last prize

go upright among those who are on their knees  
among those with their backs turned and those toppled in  
the dust

you were saved not in order to live  
you have little time you must give testimony

be courageous when the mind deceives you be  
courageous  
in the final account only this is important

and let your helpless Anger be like the sea  
whenever you hear the voice of the insulted and beaten

let your sister Scorn not leave you  
for the informers executioners cowards—they will win  
they will go to your funeral and with relief will throw a  
lump of earth  
the woodborer will write your smoothed-over biography

and do not forgive truly it is not in your power  
to forgive in the name of those betrayed at dawn

beware however of unnecessary pride  
keep looking at your clown's face in the mirror  
repeat: I was called—weren't there better ones than I

beware of dryness of heart love the morning spring  
the bird with an unknown name the winter oak

light on a wall the splendour of the sky  
they don't need your warm breath  
they are there to say: no one will console you

be vigilant—when the light on the mountains gives the  
sign—arise and go  
as long as blood turns in the breast your dark star

repeat old incantations of humanity fables and legends  
because this is how you will attain the good you will not  
attain  
repeat great words repeat them stubbornly  
like those crossing the desert who perished in the sand

and they will reward you with what they have at hand  
with the whip of laughter with murder on a garbage heap

go because only in this way will you be admitted to the  
company of cold skulls  
to the company of your ancestors: Gilgamesh Hector  
Roland  
the defenders of the kingdom without limit and the city of  
ashes

Be faithful Go

**So Little** by Czeslaw Miłosz

I said so little.  
Days were short.

Short days.  
Short nights.  
Short years.

I said so little.  
I couldn't keep up.

My heart grew weary  
From joy,  
Despair,  
Ardor,  
Hope.

The jaws of Leviathan  
Were closing upon me.

Naked, I lay on the shores  
Of desert islands.

The white whale of the world  
Hauled me down to its pit.

And now I don't know  
What in all that was real.

*Berkeley, 1969. By Czeslaw Milosz  
Translated by Czeslaw Milosz and Lillian Vallee*

**The Three Oddest Words**

By Wisława Szymborska

When I pronounce the word Future,  
the first syllable already belongs to the past.

When I pronounce the word Silence,  
I destroy it.

When I pronounce the word Nothing,  
I make something no non-being can hold.

*By Wisława Szymborska  
Translated by S. Baranczak & C. Cavanagh*

HUGO-BADER, Jacek, *White Fever: A Journey to the Frozen Heart of Siberia*, translated by Antonia Lloyd-Jones, Counterpoint, Berkeley, 2011.

### “Dream

In March 1957, possibly on the 9<sup>th</sup> at one in the afternoon, because Saturdays were when the science department of *Komsomolskaya Pravda* newspaper held its weekly meetings, two reporters given an unusual assignment by the editor-in-chief. (On that day at that time, on the polished wooden floorboards between the kitchen and the bedroom in my grandmother’s flat at 62 Warszawska Street in Sochaczewo, rather unexpectedly, in made my entrance into the world).

‘We must tell our reader about the future’, said the editor-in-chief. ‘Describe what life in Soviet Union will be like fifty years from now, let’s say at the time of the ninetieth anniversary of the Great Socialist October Revolution’.

That meant in 2007.

The book written by Mikhail Hvastunov and Sergei Gushchev, the journalist working for *Komsomolskaya Pravda*, is called *Report from the Twenty-First Century*. The authors wrote that we would use electronic brains on a daily basis (nowadays we call them computers), miniature transmitting and receiving stations (mobile-phones) and ‘bibliotransmission’ (i.e. the Internet), open cars from distance (with remote control), take photos with an electric camera (digital) and watch satellite television on flat screens.

They wrote about it at a time when in the house where I was born there was not even a black and white television set, a toilet or a phone to call the doctor.

Hvastunov and Gushchev spent most of their time in the Moscow laboratories of the Soviet Academy of Sciences, and from there they made a mental journey into the future, setting off for Siberia in the year 2007 in a wonderful jet plane.

I decided to give myself a fiftieth birthday present, which was to travel with this book right across Russia, from Moscow to Vladivostok. But I wouldn’t take the place like Hvastunov and Gushchev. I’d already been there several times by train.”

**Slawomir Mrozek, extrait de *La vie contemporaine*, traduit du polonais par Anna Posner dans : *L’éléphant*, Editions Albin Michel, Paris, 1964**

« En loyal citoyen, j’ai pris la résolution de vivre toute une journée dans l’esprit du langage des déclarations officielles.

Première journée.

Je me suis réveillé au moyen d’un puissant coup sur le crâne, me battant de la sorte pour achever avant terme ma journée-sommeil. Malgré la légère résistance que j’essayais encore de m’opposer à moi-même, les quelques coups suivants me précipitèrent de ma couche sur le plancher. Le processus de l’habillement fut déjà plus aisé, si l’on néglige quelques escarmouches sans intérêt. C’est de la sorte que j’ai remporté la bataille du lever. (...)

Deuxième journée.

Ce matin, ayant regardé par la fenêtre, je vis que dans la cour se tenait un problème, juste devant la porte cochère. Plus tard, alors que je sortais de la maison, il était encore planté là, sans avoir changé de position. Au cours de l’après-midi, je le retrouvai inchangé. Ce n’est que vers le soir qu’il se mit à s’appuyer sur l’autre jambe. Je me couchai tout empli d’inquiétude et de compassion pour le pauvre problème. Et ne voilà-t-il pas que le lendemain, on pouvait le voir, tout comme la veille, installé là. Je descendis une chaise pliante, afin qu’il pût s’asseoir, ne serait-ce qu’un instant. Mais nenni ; il restait debout comme par avant, à la seule différence près que, de temps à autre, il se permettait de courtes stations assises. « Pour un problème, c’en est un ! » me dis-je. »

*The Locomotive, Julian Tuwim, 1938.*

*Lokomotywa, Julian Tuwim, 1938*

A big locomotive has pulled into town,  
Heavy, humungus, with sweat rolling down,  
A plump jumbo olive.  
Huffing and puffing and panting and smelly,  
Fire belches forth from her fat cast iron belly.

Poof, how she's burning,  
Oof, how she's boiling,  
Puff, how she's churning,  
Huff, how she's toiling.  
She's fully exhausted and all out of breath,  
Yet the coalman continues to stoke her to  
death. [...]

*Stoi na stacji lokomotywa,  
Ciężka, ogromna i pot z niej sływa:  
Tłusta oliwa.  
Stoi i sapie, dyszy i dmucha,  
Żar z rozgrzanego jej brzucha bucha:*

*Uch - jak gorąco!  
Puff - jak gorąco!  
Uff - jak gorąco!*

*Wagony do niej podoczepiali  
Wielkie i ciężkie, z żelaza, stali [...]*

**Inwokcja, Pan Tadeusz**, by Adam Mickiewicz (English translation by **Kenneth R. Mackenzie**. Based on the bilingual (Polish-English) edition of *Pan Tadeusz* by The Polish Cultural Foundation, London, 1986)

**O Lithuania**, my country, thou  
Art like good health; I never knew till now  
How precious, till I lost thee. Now I see  
The beauty whole, because I yearn for thee.

**O Holy Maid**, who Czestochowa's shrine  
Dost guard and on the Pointed Gateway shine  
And watchest Nowogrodek's pinnacle!  
As Thou didst heal me by a miracle  
(For when my weeping mother sought Thy power,  
I raised my dying eyes, and in that hour  
My strength returned, and to Thy shrine I trod  
For life restored to offer thanks to God),  
So by a miracle Thou 'lt bring us home.  
Meanwhile, bear off my yearning soul to roam  
Those little wooded hills, those fields beside  
The azure Niemen, spreading green and wide,  
The vari-painted cornfields like a quilt,  
The silver of the rye, the wheatfields' gilt;  
Where amber trefoil, buck-wheat white as snow,  
And clover with her maiden blushes grow,  
And all is girdled with a grassy band  
Of green, whereon the silent pear trees stand.

*Litwo! Ojczyzno moja! Ty jesteś jak zdrowie,  
Ile cię trzeba cenić, ten tylko się dowie,  
Kto cię stracił. Dziś piękność twą w całej ozdobie  
Widzę i opisuję, bo tęsknię po tobie"*  
*Panno święta, co Jasnej bronisz Częstochowy  
I w Ostrej świecisz Bramie! Ty, co gród zamkowy  
Nowogródzki ochraniasz z jego wiernym ludem!  
Jak mnie dziecko do zdrowia powróciłaś cudem,  
(Gdy od płaczącej matki pod Twoją opiekę  
Ofiarowany, martwą podniosłem powiekę  
I zaraz mogłem pieszo do Twych świątyń progu  
Iść za wrócone życie podziękować Bogu),  
Tak nas powrócisz cudem na Ojczyzny łono.  
Tymczasem przenoś moją duszę utęsknioną  
Do tych pagórków leśnych, do tych łąk zielonych,  
Szeroko nad błękitnym Niemnem rozciągnionych;  
Do tych pól malowanych zbożem rozmaitem,  
Wyzlacanych pszenicą, posrebrzanych żytem;  
Gdzie bursztynowy świerzop, gryka jak śnieg biała,  
Gdzie panińskim rumieńcem dzięcielina pała,  
A wszystko przepasane jakby wstęgą, miedzą  
Zieloną, na niej z rzadka ciche grusze siedzą.*