

# Cultural Daily

Independent Voices, New Perspectives

## Jack Grapes: "SZYMBORSKA"

Jack Grapes · Thursday, February 9th, 2012

*Jack Grapes is an award-winning poet, playwright, actor, teacher, and the editor and publisher of ONTHEBUS, one of the top literary journals in the country. This poem is from Jack's new book, The Naked Eye. Signed copies may be ordered directly from the poet [here](#).*

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## SZYMBORSKA

I came home  
Wednesday night from class  
and Lori was ensconced  
like a caterpillar in a cocoon  
on the bed, watching a movie on tv  
about crazy people who fall in love  
and break china.  
“Szyborska died,” I said.  
She reached for the remote  
and shut the tv off.  
The room expanded  
into that quiet bubble we experience  
when we shut off the tv.  
She looked at me and said nothing.  
What was there to say?  
A friend dies, a poet dies, poetry lives on:  
There's nothing you can say.  
It's like turning off the tv,  
and their passing  
fills the space of our lives  
with all that silence.  
A balloon of being and nothingness,  
a reduction of existence  
into a series of appearances,  
overcoming those dualisms  
that have embarrassed philosophy  
and replacing them with the monism  
of the phenomenon.

I put the clipboard  
I still had in my hand  
on the dresser  
and began to undress.  
Then I got in the bed  
and lay beside her.  
We still hadn't spoken.  
Szyborska was gone.  
We just lay there for a bit,  
in the silence,  
not sure who would break it,  
not sure whose turn it was  
to turn the moment  
back into words.  
You need a poet  
at a time like this,  
and the poet was gone.  
There was a small crack in the ceiling.  
And a tiny cobweb in the corner.  
Later, Lori'd probably get on a chair  
and with a tissue  
wipe it away.  
That was her job,  
getting those little tiny spider webs  
gone before they engulfed the house,  
our lives, the planet. Don't  
worry, dear reader, she's on the job.  
You will be safe.  
"What's my job?" asks Lori  
when she's nagging me.  
And I repeat the mantra:  
"To take care of me."  
But for now, with Szyborksa's passing  
still blooming into silence,  
the cobweb  
would have to wait,  
the crack  
would just have to bide its time.  
Such a long silence.  
Then I thought, fuck it.  
I reached for the remote  
and clicked the tv back on.  
There went a teacup.  
Crash.  
There went another.  
Crash.  
It was good to get back  
to a semblance of the world,

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all that love and passion,  
all those broken teacups.

*Wis?awa Szymborska, who died February 1, 2012, was a Polish poet who won the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1996.*

*We are proud to be premiering this poem today.*

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