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.

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. "Szymborska 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.

Szymborska 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 Szymborksa'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,

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.

This entry was posted on Thursday, February 9th, 2012 at 2:33 pm and is filed under Poetry You can follow any responses to this entry through the Comments (RSS) feed. You can leave a response, or trackback from your own site.