

# Ten Poems

Contributed by Grzegorz Wróblewski

translated from the Polish by Adam Zdrodowski

## The Rose Demands a Poem

The rose demands a poem sensitive to a lizard's tongue,  
crooked cumulus clouds or the gesticulation of deranged  
children.

(You remind me of a rose, my cunning rose!)

She would like a lofty day, a betrayal or a duel over a demonic  
woman  
that would have cheeks as smooth as her delicate  
petals.

Could the rose be a feminist?

A calculating politician?

(Thinking about the rose, I associate independence or only domination.

A lot of blood has been spilled, and the rose took part in this incident...)

A withered rose or a juicy rose... (The rose doesn't have to be connected  
with baroque lyricists exclusively, the rose was also inspiring to lonely  
astronauts and ruthless procurers of all descriptions.)

The rose has always been the muse of poets.

Does this poem give you satisfaction at last?

## Escapes and Approximations

I am by no means the one you had been dreaming about...

Are you waiting for a change of my interests?

Even two-headed butterflies under meticulously  
dusted glass, would they do?

Meanwhile, since morning I've been sending you love letters...

Calm down, there are still so many important errands  
to run, you escape.

Important errands don't have the taste of your lips,  
I'm imitating an ancient poet.

Let's set it:

The day is allotted to the pursuit of carpets and the night  
to a rational rest before the next day...

(At noon you can afford to read the Guardian.

So move away to a safe distance.)

In this case:

Effusiveness of feelings after the end of an evening chat  
about how you should prepare sweet potatoes  
(but then it's time to put out the light...).

Once again lips and colourful, exotic shells.

I dreamt that I made love to you in a steaming ocean.

And do you know how much a steaming ocean costs?

You'd better go to a course in masculinity in Istanbul,  
let them show you women slaves and a jewel case full of  
almighty gold.

## Afternoon Apparitions

This bulky woman sipping her wine next to me  
 Or the other one, in a black dress,  
 whom I'm passing now  
 and whom I'll probably never pass again  
 Or even the doctor without make-up  
 who's checking my pulse with a cool hand, surprised that I'm still breathing

Suddenly I see their faces leaning over me  
 I think we have something in common

&ndash; that for a moment I could be happy with all of them...

#### The Return of the Armada

In the flat country, poetry still flourishes:  
 Water-nymphs  
 stopped pestering me.  
 We should dig in the Jute peat bogs.

Certainly,  
 there lie there many brown men with slit  
 throats and seeds  
 in well-preserved entrails.  
 (Seamus Heaney should become an honorary  
 citizen of Aarhus.)

When will the armada I sent in 1970 in search of  
 Atahualpa's rings return?  
 Rotten, Lilliputian ships &ndash; two-headed birds  
 will come out to greet them.

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The first girl I fell in love with  
 told me incessantly  
 about her passion for preparing hens' stomachs.

Even listening to Brahms  
 in the evenings didn't help us.  
 Love evaporated in no time.

The second one ate tulips before going to sleep.  
 Then I began to ponder again  
 about the first one.

#### A Visit by a Woman from Before Five Months Ago

Instead of you &ndash; something very  
 similar to you.  
 (Doesn't scream.)

Then a telephone:  
 And how was it this time?

Be careful choosing new lovers.  
 Sex with phantoms is worse  
 than nicotine.

A chubby blonde  
 will prove the easiest.  
 If you are of medium

height.

So the star-gazers say.

The black-haired ones are dangerous.  
They won't leave your mind  
for 200 long days.

You can drink boiled water  
but you'll still have nightmares  
and humiliation.

A Summation Scheme (About the Illnes of John T.)

A general state of consciousness?  
In the tenement house live a pimp and a carpet-seller.  
Neither of them can stand Dante.  
Because  
they have never set their eyes on him.  
Because we're flooded by light literature and life  
is devoid of a single shred of comedy.  
A mannerism of thought is out of the question here.

It's rather the style of the punchline or a classically degenerate speech.  
Secular, prehistoric content.  
But... no!  
The pimp has heard something about Virgil.  
Because it had something to do with the stealing of old prints.  
He might have meant Caligula's white stallion.  
Why is there so much bitterness in me?  
And it would be like that everywhere:

Even  
if somebody mastered the whole of Cervantes,  
it would never occur to him  
to devote himself to the study of Diderot or, say,  
Panfilo Sasso's summation scheme.

Black Head

1.  
Ghosts are unhappy at our place. Together with a mad family of cats, we look  
at the snow-covered Black Head. "Don't you think that Black Head  
is heading in our direction?"

2.  
Calm down, it's just a mountain.  
Mountains don't move yet. And even if they do...  
(Then we're dead.)

3.  
Will the cats manage to hide?  
Yes, cats have their mysterious tunnels (cats and May bugs.)  
Something must have provoked her!

4.  
Was it the skyscrapers? Then you should quickly believe in your reality...  
You're an accidental being,  
just like me.

### Three Plaits

Amulet trade in the morning.  
Bone serpents haven't started their negotiations yet.  
Bards hidden in oaks twitter  
about the gods' will and men not born  
of women.  
Your spells on the back seat  
&ndash; you look like Macha Mong Ruadh,  
the daughter of Aed Ruadh.

### Light at the River

Already wingless (The moon flees from  
the insects) In a moment  
starry leftovers

in the reeds, the first crayfish catchers  
Kidnap her and make her weave  
wicker baskets.