

they've never known the blessing of this inner impulse. It's just not easy to if it actually exists. It's not that evasively when asked what it is, and Contemporaray poets answer I've mentioned inspiration.

stand to watch this kind of thing

which nothing happens ... Who could then another hour passes, during one of them fifteen minutes later, and down seven lines only to cross out

one while this person writes Once in a while this person starts moving unless at a wall or ceiling. sits at a table or lies on a sofa while hopelessly unphotogenic. Someone

But poets are the worst. Their work is first bars of the melody that rings in course this is all quite naive and a mature work in sympathetic form. Of the musicians' ears finally emerge as doesn't explain the strange mental state popularly known as inspiration,

but at least there's something to look at and listen to.

at the bottom of the film that

biographies of great scientists and artists are produced in droves. The process that led to important reproduction convincingly the creative more ambitious directors seek to scientific discoveries or the one can depict certain kinds of such scenes may hold the audience's interest for a while. And those moments of uncertainty – will the result? – can be quite dramatic. Films that hasn't time with some tiny experiments, conducted for the modification, finally yield the desired stand to watch this kind of thing every stage of a famous paintings as they go about recreating them, strip off their mantles,

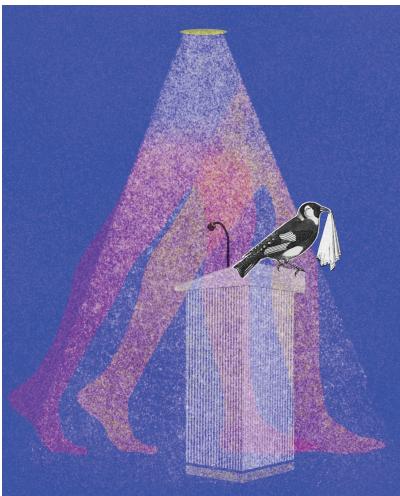
swells in films about composers: the evolution, from the first pencil line to the final brush-stroke. Music paraphernalia, and confront – silently, frappes, and other poetic poems had to close the doors behind merely for the sake of public display. The moment always came when eccentric behavior. But all this was decades, that poets strove to shock us with their extravagant dress and so long ago, in this century's first and the daily grind. And yet it wasn't until recently – with the poet laureate Joseph Brodsky was once sentenced to internal exile precisely on such grounds. They called him "a parasite," because he lacked official status. Let us recall that the pride of Russian Poetry, the future Nobel laureate poet, in turn, that it's not enough to be a poet bearing an official slip of paper with even the most exquisite poems in order to become a poet. The crucial element is some cover pages with some attaché case, and finally, ceremoniously exchanged diplomas. And this would mean, in turn, that the brutal humiliations he received the brutal humiliations he recalled the must have been because he defiant freedom. It seems to me that just the opposite – he spoke it with had experienced in his youth.

in more fortunate countries, where this must have been because he defied the brutal humiliations he had experienced in his youth.

human dignity isn't assuaged so readily, poets yearn, of course, to be themselves above the common herd they do little, if anything, to set published, read, and understood, but themselves above the common herd they do little, if anything, to set themselfs apart, because they're not quite sure what really counts.

several years ago, I had the honor and pleasure of meeting Brodsky in person. And I noticed that the only poet I've known, he was the only poet who enjoyed calling himself a poet without inhibitions.

Wislawa Szymborska: The poet and the world



They say the first sentence in any speech is always the hardest. Well, that one's behind me, anyway. But I have a feeling that the sentences to come – the third, the sixth, the tenth, and so on, up to the final line – will be just as hard, since I'm supposed to talk about poetry. I've said very little on the subject, next to nothing, in fact. And whenever I have said anything, I've always had the sneaking suspicion that I'm not very good at it. This is why my lecture will be rather short. All imperfection is easier to tolerate if served up in small doses.

Contemporary poets are skeptical and suspicious even, or perhaps especially, about themselves. They publicly confess to being poets only reluctantly, as if they were a little ashamed of it. But in our clamorous times it's much easier to acknowledge your faults, at least if they're attractively packaged, than

to recognize your own merits, since these are hidden deeper and you never quite believe in them yourself ... When filling in questionnaires or chatting with strangers, that is, when they can't avoid revealing their profession, poets prefer to use the general term "writer" or replace "poet" with the name of whatever job they do in addition to writing. Bureaucrats and bus passengers respond with a touch of incredulity and alarm when they find out that they're dealing with a poet. I suppose philosophers may meet with a similar reaction. Still, they're in a better position, since as often as not they can embellish their calling with some kind of scholarly title. Professor of philosophy – now that sounds much more respectable.

But there are no professors of poetry. This would mean, after all, that poetry is an occupation requiring specialized study, regular

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explain something to someone else that you don't understand yourself.

When I'm asked about this on occasion, I hedge the question too. But my answer is this: inspiration is not the exclusive privilege of poets or artists generally. There is, has been, and will always be a certain group of people whom inspiration visits. It's made up of all those who've consciously chosen their calling and do their job with love and imagination. It may include doctors, teachers, gardeners – and I could list a hundred more professions. Their work becomes one continuous adventure as long as they manage to keep discovering new challenges in it. Difficulties and setbacks never quell their curiosity. A swarm of new questions emerges from every problem they solve. Whatever inspiration is, it's born from a continuous "I don't know."

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that's absolutely inadequate to boot. So the poets keep on trying, and sooner or later the consecutive results of their self-dissatisfaction are clipped together with a giant paperclip by literary historians and called their "oeuvre" ...

I sometimes dream of situations that can't possibly come true. I audaciously imagine, for example, that I get a chance to chat with the Ecclesiastes, the author of that moving lament on the vanity of all human endeavors. I would bow very deeply before him, because he is, after all, one of the greatest poets, for me at least. That done, I would grab his hand. "There's nothing new under the sun": that's what you wrote, Ecclesiastes. But you yourself were born new under the sun. And the poem you created is also new under the sun, since no one wrote it down before you. And all your readers are also new under the sun, since those who lived before you couldn't

There aren't many such people. Most of the earth's inhabitants work to get by. They work because they have to. They didn't pick this or that kind of job out of passion; the circumstances of their lives did the choosing for them. Loveless work, boring work, work valued only because others haven't got even that much, however loveless and boring – this is one of the harshest human miseries. And there's no sign that coming centuries will produce any changes for the better as far as this goes.

And so, though I may deny poets their monopoly on inspiration, I still place them in a select group of Fortune's darlings.

At this point, though, certain doubts may arise in my audience. All sorts of torturers, dictators, fanatics, and demagogues struggling for power by way of a few loudly shouted slogans

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read your poem. And that cypress that you're sitting under hasn't been growing since the dawn of time. It came into being by way of another cypress similar to yours, but not exactly the same. And Ecclesiastes, I'd also like to ask you what new thing under the sun you're planning to work on now? A further supplement to the thoughts you've already expressed? Or maybe you're tempted to contradict some of them now? In your earlier work you mentioned joy – so what if it's fleeting? So maybe your new-under-the-sun poem will be about joy? Have you taken notes yet, do you have drafts? I doubt you'll say, 'I've written everything down, I've got nothing left to add.' There's no poet in the world who can say this, least of all a great poet like yourself."

The world – whatever we might think when terrified by its vastness and our own impotence, or embittered by its indifference to individual suffering, of

also enjoy their jobs, and they too perform their duties with inventive fervor. Well, yes, but they "know." They know, and whatever they know is enough for them once and for all. They don't want to find out about anything else, since that might diminish their arguments' force. And any knowledge that doesn't lead to new questions quickly dies out: it fails to maintain the temperature required for sustaining life. In the most extreme cases, cases well known from ancient and modern history, it even poses a lethal threat to society.

This is why I value that little phrase "I don't know" so highly. It's small, but it flies on mighty wings. It expands our lives to include the spaces within us as well as those outer expanses in which our tiny Earth hangs suspended. If Isaac Newton had never said to himself "I don't know," the apples in his little orchard might have

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people, animals, and perhaps even plants, for why are we so sure that plants feel no pain; whatever we might think of its expanses pierced by the rays of stars surrounded by planets we've just begun to discover, planets already dead? still dead? we just don't know; whatever we might think of this measureless theater to which we've got reserved tickets, but tickets whose lifespan is laughably short, bounded as it is by two arbitrary dates; whatever else we might think of this world – it is astonishing.

But "astonishing" is an epithet concealing a logical trap. We're astonished, after all, by things that deviate from some well-known and universally acknowledged norm, from an obviousness we've grown accustomed to. Now the point is, there is no such obvious world. Our astonishment exists per se and isn't

dropped to the ground like hailstones and at best he would have stooped to pick them up and gobble them with gusto. Had my compatriot Marie Skłodowska-Curie never said to herself "I don't know", she probably would have wound up teaching chemistry at some private high school for young ladies from good families, and would have ended her days performing this otherwise perfectly respectable job. But she kept on saying "I don't know," and these words led her, not just once but twice, to Stockholm, where restless, questing spirits are occasionally rewarded with the Nobel Prize.

Poets, if they're genuine, must also keep repeating "I don't know." Each poem marks an effort to answer this statement, but as soon as the final period hits the page, the poet begins to hesitate, starts to realize that this particular answer was pure makeshift

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based on comparison with something else.

Granted, in daily speech, where we don't stop to consider every word, we all use phrases like "the ordinary world," "ordinary life," "the ordinary course of events" ... But in the language of poetry, where every word is weighed, nothing is usual or normal. Not a single stone and not a single cloud above it. Not a single day and not a single night after it. And above all, not a single existence, not anyone's existence in this world.

It looks like poets will always have their work cut out for them.

—
Cover by Fiorella Ferroni. Translated from Polish by Stanislaw Baranczak and Clare Cavanagh

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people than the winners, written come from arguably reach more laureates are where they annually. Summaries of who the committee's choices abound ideas—criticisms of the or too swayed by illusory cultural white, too male, too contrary to, excitation. Too European, too Prizes, with literature proving no inextricably linked to all Nobel international politics are Alfred Nobel chose the Swedish Prize that still inspires fierce arguments, intense celebration, and online gambling across the globe. Of course, geography and online gambling acrobatics the globe. Dot course, geographies the and international politics are international, yet-to-be So, with minimal-yet-lofty guidance, a nineteenth-century armaments tycoon bequeathed a prize be awarded to the worthiest person, whether or not they are given to natiorality, but that the Scandinavian.

Voices Around Me



Nobel Prize Lectures

Foreword

By Jessi Haley, Editorial Coordinator at Cita Press

In 2022, Annie Ernaux became the seventeenth woman to win the Nobel Prize in Literature. She is also the first French woman, the sixteenth French citizen, the ninety-sixth European, and the 119th person to win. In her acceptance letter, she stated “I do not regard as an individual victory the Nobel prize that has been awarded me. It is neither from pride nor modesty that I see it, in some sense, as a collective victory.”

Ernaux’s claim of a collective ownership for a highly

individualized award echoes ideas shared by many of the women laureates that came before her—as does her emphasis on the tension between the patriarchal system the Nobel stems from (and, to many, still represents) and the structural position of some winners, particularly women. When asked if she anticipated the prize, 2013 laureate Alice Munro replied: “Oh, no, no! I was a woman! . . . I just love the honor, I love it, but I just didn’t think that way.” Learning about her win from a group of reporters as she returned home from a hospital visit, eighty-seven-year-old Doris Lessing was flustered: “They told me a long time ago they didn’t like me and I would never get it. . . They sent a special official to tell me so.” Surrounded by

laureates, “no consideration by committees was that, in selecting only instruction for the peace, medicine, economics). His groups to select laureates from the other categories (chemistry, literature prize, just as he chose Academy as the arbiter of the Alfred Nobel chose the Swedish folkloric fiction).

borrowed from realism but returned to the romantic in her both cases: Selma Lagerlöf, who their ranks (the same woman in award. This was five years before they ever elected a woman to years into the existence of the woman Nobel laureate eight committtee selected the first Foundation by 115 years. The was installed by King Gustav III in 1786, so it predates the Nobel lifetime tenure. The academy “conferred the greatest benefit to

litterary professionals (DFAA) draws from The Swedish Academy, a group of eighteen members whose membership committee chosen by a laureates are chosen via the specific. must, with their words, illuminate (particularly all women); they must represent all of us generations. At the same time, nations, ideologies, and understood to represent specific counter of apartheid.” They are female experience” or the “Geiger assigned roles like “the epitome of the literature prize have been laureates. Women who have won and hefty responsibilities to the this edit applies vague gravity and individualized award echoes ideas shared by many of the women laureates that came before her—as does her emphasis on the tension between the patriarchal system the Nobel stems from (and, to many, still represents) and the structural position of some winners, particularly women. When asked if she anticipated the prize, 2013 laureate Alice Munro replied: “Oh, no, no! I was a woman! . . . I just love the honor, I love it, but I just didn’t think that way.” Learning about her win from a group of reporters as she returned home from a hospital visit, eighty-seven-year-old Doris Lessing was flustered: “They told me a long time ago they didn’t like me and I would never get it. . . They sent a special official to tell me so.” Surrounded by

people whose work has namesake prize to recognize own professional domain was inventing dynamite. Though his changed the world most by Nobel, a Swede who perhaps critica set in the will of Alfred idealistic direction.” This is the field of literature, produced the most outstanding work in an writers. Writers who win the entry, there is little on the surface beyond a sense of breaking into a boys’ club and the communal will be using from now on.” “I swear I’m going upstairs to find some suitable sentences,” which I snapping cameras, she promised:

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toward the inefficiencies of politics, so often prickly (sometimes
in her novels of colonialialism, imagined futures
our stories that we are torn
when we are destroyed. It is the
the dream-makers
myth-makers, that
that represent us
and at our most
Mueller's work paid
impressionsistic
lives under Nicolae Ceausescu
dictatorship in Romania.
stranger to having
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the more words you
take, the freer

Through Lagerlof's works, making ideology a major award, nearly half of the women are concurred in the last eighteen years. The women in Laurea Europe, as are more laureates in general, Latin American and she remains that the American woman was a woman (Chile) Gabriele Mistral, a Latin American author and she remains that American women remainders to date overwhelmedly won the Nobel Prize in literature. The American women have faced famine lived experience, little displacement, little.

force, its felicity is in its reach lessing, so often setting a pricky (sometimes cynical) ton in her novels of frustrated politics, colonialism, and imagined futures, is hopeful: "It our stories that will recreate us when we are torn, hurt, even destroyed. It is the storyteller, myth-maker, that is our phoenix that represents us at our best, and at our most creative."

Muller's work paints visceral, impulsive scenes of strife lives under Nicolae Ceausescu's dictatorship in Romania. No stranger to having words withheld, she explains: "After all the more words we are allowed to take, the freer we become."

"in the language of poetry, where every word is weighed, nothing is unusual or normal . . . not a single existence, not anyone's existence in this world." Only Szybomska, who once wrote "After every war / someone has to clean up," can be so gentle and so firm at the same time.

Gordimer, whose novels dissect the human wreckage wrought by institutionalized racism and cycles of violence, confirms that writing is always and at once an exploration of self and of the world, of individual and collective being".

Each writer's Nobel lecture includes something that could be applied across the work of the other women who have won,

something that collects the

Morrison, whose novels explore
so many facets of Black America
life with language that is as
precise as it is poetic, argues that
language can never live up to life
once and for all. Nor should it...it
is interesting, any surroundings can
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Gordimer's concrete political lessons to Zygmunt Bauman's larger abstract musings to fables (Morrison)—each contains observations that are at once totaliy complex and recognizable as true.

"master of the contemporary," Munro asserts that she knew she could write about small-town Canadian life because "[t]hink any life can be interesting," any surroundings can be interesting that is as fine with language as it is preclise as it is poetic, argues that the full lectures, which features the full lectures by Svetlana Alexievich, Gordimer, Doris Lessing, Toni Morrison, Herta Müller, Alice Munro, and Wislawa Szymborska. The pieces represent writers' unique styles. We present this book—free, online first, and with an account new cover by Gordimer to share in these women's work and ideas.

Gordimer's concrete political lessons to Zygmunt Skarski's abstract musings to fables (Morrison)—each contains observations that are at once totally complex and recognizable true.

With characteristic directness, "master of the contemporary", Munro assesses that short story she could write about small-town Canadian life because: "I think any life can be interesting; any surroundings can be interesting".

Morrisons, whose novels explore so many facets of Black American life with language that is as precise as it is poetic, argues that "language can never live up to life...it once and for all. Nor should it...it personally, their names will always be paired with the phrase "Nobel Prize winner", and they appear means for these women No matter what the recognition invents a new genre to tell.

of the world whose story she arrests, she fled—leaving behind 2020. Facing abduction and forced into her second exile in Alexievich from being获奖者 how to give a party".

Winning the prize in 2015 did not prevent Alexievich from being arrested in Stockholm. "I like the Nobel Prize", she said. "Because they gathered friends to celebrate with her in Meanwhile, Morrison wrote for years after the onslaught of attention. Meanwhile, Morrison's characteristic directness, "master of the contemporary", Munro assesses that short story she could write about small-town Canadian life because: "I think any life can be interesting; any surroundings can be interesting".

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