

WISŁAWA SZYMBORSKA

A Poem in Polish

with an English translation by

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Wystarczy, eby był rop naftow ,
pasz tre ciw czy surowcem wtórnym.
Albo I stołem obrad, o którego kształt
spierano si miesi cami
przy jakim pertraktowa o yciu i mierci,
okr głym czy kwadratowym.

Tymczasem gin li ludzie,
zdychały zwierz ta,
płon ły domy
i dziczały pola
jak w epokach zamierzchłych
i mniej politycznych.

Children of This Age

We are the children of this age,
this age is political.

All your, his, our
day and night-time affairs
are political affairs.

Whether you like it or not
your genes have a political future
the colour of your skin is political
your eyes have a political dimension.
Whatever you say has its echo
whatever you keep quiet about
is political regardless.

Apolitical poems are political too
the moon in the sky does not look like the moon.
To be or not to be, that is the question.
What question, tell me, my darling?
The political question.

You need not even be a human being
to acquire political importance.
It is enough just to be oil
fodder or recyclable material
or a conference table, the shape of which
can be on an agenda for months.
All this time people have been dying
animals have been starving
houses have been burning
fields have been turning fallow
just as in far off distant
less political ages.