

## Biography - Wislawa Szymborska

Wislawa Szymborska was born in Kornik in Western Poland on 2 July 1923. Since 1931 she has been living in Krakow, where during 1945-1948 she studied Polish Literature and Sociology at the Jagiellonian University. Szymborska made her début in March 1945 with a poem "Szukam słowa" (I am Looking for a Word) in the daily "Dziennik Polski".

During 1953-1981 she worked as poetry editor and columnist in the Kraków literary weekly "Zycie Literackie" where the series of her essays "Lektury nadobowiazkowe" appeared (the series has been renewed lately in the addition to "Gazeta Wyborcza"-"Gazeta o Ksiazkach"). The collection "Lektury nadobowiazkowe" was published in the form of a book four times.

[Szymborska](#) has published 16 collections of poetry: Dlatego zyjemy (1952), Pytania zadawane sobie (1954), Wolanie do Yeti (1957), Sól (1962), Wiersze wybrane (1964), Poezje wybrane (1967), Sto pociech (1967), Poezje (1970), Wszelki wypadek (1972), Wybór wierszy (1973), Tarsjusz i inne wiersze (1976), Wielka liczba (1976), Poezje wybrane II (1983), Ludzie na moscie (1986). Koniec i poczatek (1993, 1996), Widok z ziarnkiem piasku. 102 wiersze (1996) . Wislawa Szymborska has also translated French poetry.

Her poems have been translated (and published in book form) in English, German, Swedish, Italian, Danish, Hebrew, Hungarian, Czech, Slovakian, Serbo-Croatian, Romanian, Bulgarian and other languages. They have also been published in many foreign anthologies of Polish poetry.

Wislawa Szymborska is the Goethe Prize winner (1991) and Herder Prize winner (1995). She has a degree of Honorary Doctor of Letters of Poznan University (1995). In 1996 she received the Polish PEN Club prize.

### Wislawa Szymborska (1996)



View: [Szymborska Poems](#)

## **Tortures by Wislawa Szymborska**

Nothing has changed.  
The body is susceptible to pain,  
it must eat and breathe air and sleep,  
it has thin skin and blood right underneath,  
an adequate stock of teeth and nails,  
its bones are breakable, its joints are stretchable.  
In tortures all this is taken into account.

Nothing has changed.  
The body shudders as it shuddered  
before the founding of Rome and after,  
in the twentieth century before and after Christ.  
Tortures are as they were, it's just the earth that's grown smaller,  
and whatever happens seems right on the other side of the wall.

Nothing has changed. It's just that there are more people,  
besides the old offenses new ones have appeared,  
real, imaginary, temporary, and none,  
but the howl with which the body responds to them,  
was, is and ever will be a howl of innocence  
according to the time-honored scale and tonality.

Nothing has changed. Maybe just the manners, ceremonies, dances.  
Yet the movement of the hands in protecting the head is the same.  
The body writhes, jerks and tries to pull away,  
its legs give out, it falls, the knees fly up,  
it turns blue, swells, salivates and bleeds.

Nothing has changed. Except for the course of boundaries,  
the line of forests, coasts, deserts and glaciers.  
Amid these landscapes traipses the soul,  
disappears, comes back, draws nearer, moves away,  
alien to itself, elusive, at times certain, at others uncertain of its own existence,  
while the body is and is and is  
and has no place of its own.

## Tortures

Rien n'a changé.  
Le corps est douloureux,  
Il doit manger, respirer et dormir,  
Il a la peau fine, et du sang qui affleure,  
Des réserves d'ongles et de dents,  
Os qui cassent, ligaments qui s'étirent.  
La torture prend en compte tout cela.

Rien n'a changé.  
Le corps tremble comme il a tremblé  
avant la création de Rome et après,  
au vingtième siècle d'avant et après Jésus-christ,  
la torture demeure, la terre seule a rétréci,  
et tout s'y passe comme dans la pièce voisine.

Rien n'a changé.  
Il y a simplement davantage d'umains,  
Aux fautes séculaires s'ajoutent des fautes nouvelles,  
Réelles, supposées, momentanées et nulles,  
Mais le cri que le corps fait jaillir  
Est toujours en cri d'innocence,  
Selon les éternels registres et mesures.

Tout cela sous un ciel par nature incéleste  
Où se couche le soleil sans se coucher du tout,  
Se cachant sans l'en faire derrière un nuage qui s'ignore,  
Agité par le vent, sans raison que le souffle.

Une seconde qui passe.  
Une autre seconde.  
Une troisième seconde.  
Mais il ne s'agit que de nos trois secondes.

Le temps passe tel un messager avec une nouvelle urgente.  
Mais cette métaphore nous appartient en propre.  
Personnage fictif, empressement factice,  
Et nouvelle inhumaine.

(1986)

## Torturas

Nada ha cambiado.  
el cuerpo es doloroso,  
debe comer, respirar y dormir,  
tiene la piel fina, y sangre que aflora,  
reservas de uñas y dientes,  
huesos que se fracturan, ligamentos que se estiran.  
la tortura toma en cuenta todo esto.

Nada ha cambiado.  
el cuerpo tiembla como tembló  
antes de la creación de Roma y después,  
en el siglo veinte antes y después de Cristo,

La tortura permanece, solo la tierra ha retrocedido,  
y todo sucede como en la habitación de al lado.

Nada ha cambiado.  
suplemente hay más seres humanos,  
las culpas seculares Arden más culpas,  
reales, supuestas, momentáneas y nulas,  
pero el grito que el cuerpo hace sufrir  
es siempre un grito de inocencia,  
según los eternos registros y medidas.

Todo lo que está bajo el cielo por naturaleza no celestial  
donde el sol se pone sin ponerse del todo,  
escondiéndose sin hacer detrás una nube que se ignora,  
agitado por el viento, sin razón para soplar.

Un segundo que pasa.  
otro segundo.  
un tercer segundo.  
pero no se trata más que de tres segundos.

El tiempo pasa como un mensajero con una noticia urgente.

Pero esta metáfora nos pertenece.  
personaje ficticio, afán de maniquí,  
y noticia inhumana.

*(1986)*