

CHILDREN OF OUR AGE

from 'Poems New and Collected' (1988)

by Wislawa Szymborska

trans. Stanislaw Baranczak & Clare Cavanagh

proposed by André Lepecki

*All day long, all through the night,
all affairs--yours, ours, theirs--
are political affairs.*

*Whether you like it or not,
your genes have a political past,
your skin, a political cast,
your eyes, a political slant.*

*Whatever you say reverberates,
whatever you don't say speaks for itself.
So either way you're talking politics.*

*Even when you take to the woods,
you're taking political steps
on political grounds.*

*Apolitical poems are also political,
and above us shines a moon
no longer purely lunar.
To be or not to be, that is the question.
And though it troubles the digestion
it's a question, as always, of politics.*

*To acquire a political meaning
you don't even have to be human.
Raw material will do,
or protein feed, or crude oil,*

*or a conference table whose shape
was quarreled over for months;
Should we arbitrate life and death
at a round table or a square one?*

*Meanwhile, people perished,
animals died,
houses burned,
and the fields ran wild
just as in times immemorial
and less political.*

NO ISLAND BUT OTHER CONNECTIONS*

An act of remembering sound-territory connections
related to aural folklore

CAVEJA

*Farmer, blood of the servant,
Your plough has remained without music.*

Caveja: An agricultural work tool and a poly-functional instrument for sound ceremonies (with superstitious and symbolic value), common in Romagna. It consists of a steel body composed of a stalk, a decorative top piece (pagella), and two to six circular rings.

The ploughing of the land and the towing of wagons was done by oxen. The animals were always coupled two by two in a yoke carved from a fig tree. The yoke was placed across the necks of the beasts and secured to the horns with straps. In addition to being equipped with a sling to prevent sideways movement, the yoke had at its centre a special slot in which the tiller - usually made of wood - was inserted. Some long pins made out of boxwood, acacia, or sorb were used to tie the yoke to the tiller. Over time, the tiller was replaced with a metal version and a more resistant pin, the caveja, proving more practical for braking and towing.

Initially, cavejas were rudimentary pieces of forged iron with a simple ring, devised to help pull the tiller. When the oxen were in motion, the ring emitted a rhythmic tinkling: people connected this sound with all the superstitious and religious energy attached to rural necessities. In given circumstances and through particular gestures and rites, the tool was transformed into the Caveja Cantante, a multifunctional instrument whose sound is magical, conciliatory, and protective.

The caveja was used in sound rituals (even in complex representations) as a way of identifying the sex of an unborn child, to calm storms, to bless wine; it served as a sign of restriction during Holy Week, was used to predict the arrival of messengers, to protect a marriage, as a pledge, to quell nightmares, to uncover adultery, incest, and rape; to bless wagons, to heal curses, to summon bees...

* *No Island but Other Connections* is a site-specific research project by Enrico Malatesta. Sound is presented as a multidimensional event to participate in, becoming the instrument through which advanced listening devices, spatial practice, social interaction, and acts of remembering can be achieved. The texts are extracted from the documentation of the first edition of the project that took place at the MET (Museo degli Usi e Costumi della Gente di Romagna), during the last edition of the Santarcangelo Festival.