

2 Poems by Cyprian Kamil Norwid

MY SONG (II)

Cyprian Kamil Norwid

For that land where a scrap of bread is picked up From the ground out of reverence For Heaven's gifts... I am homesick, Lord!...	I long still for yet another thing, likewise innocent, For I no longer know where to find My abode... I am homesick, Lord!
For the land where it's a great travesty To harm a stork's nest in a pear tree, For storks serve us all... I am homesick, Lord!...	For worrying-not and thinking-not, For those whose yes means yes --- and no means no --- Without shades of grey... I am homesick, Lord!
For the land where we greet each other In the ancient Christian custom: "May Christ's name be praised!" I am homesick, Lord!...	I long for that distant place, where someone cares for me! It must be thus, though my friendship Will never come to pass!... I am homesick, Lord!

-translated by Walter Whipple

TO CITIZEN JOHN BROWN

(From a letter written to America: November, 1859)

Cyprian Kamil Norwid

Across the Ocean's rolling expanse
I send you a song, as it were a seagull, oh John!...

Its flight will be long to the Land
Of the Free -- for it's now doubtful whether it will arrive...
-- Or whether, as a ray from your noble grey hair,
White -- on an empty scaffold alights:
That your hangman's son with child's hand
May cast stones at the guest seagull.

Then the ropes will tell whether
Your bare neck is unyielding;
Then you will try the ground under your heels,
That you may kick away this debased planet --
And the dirt from beneath your feet, as a frightened reptile
Vanishes --
(ind) Then will they utter: "Hanged..." --
They will speak and wonder among themselves, could this be a lie?
Then, before they place the hat on your face,
That America, having recognized her son,
Will not shout at her twelve stars:
"Extinguish the feigned fires of my crown,
Night falls -- a black night with the face of a Negro!"

Then, before Kosciuszko's phantom and Washington's
Quake -- accept the beginning of the song, oh John...

For while the song matures, sometimes a man will die,
But before the song dies, a nation will first arise.

-translated by Walter Whipple