

# Late Ripeness

BY CZESLAW MILOSZ

TRANSLATED BY ROBERT HASS AND CZESLAW MILOSZ

Not soon, as late as the approach of my ninetieth year,  
I felt a door opening in me and I entered  
the clarity of early morning.

One after another my former lives were departing,  
like ships, together with their sorrow.

And the countries, cities, gardens, the bays of seas  
assigned to my brush came closer,  
ready now to be described better than they were before.

I was not separated from people,  
grief and pity joined us.  
We forget—I kept saying—that we are all children of the King.

For where we come from there is no division  
into Yes and No, into is, was, and will be.

Moments from yesterday and from centuries ago—  
a sword blow, the painting of eyelashes before a mirror  
of polished metal, a lethal musket shot, a caravel  
staving its hull against a reef—they dwell in us,  
waiting for a fulfillment.

I knew, always, that I would be a worker in the vineyard,  
as are all men and women living at the same time,  
whether they are aware of it or not.