

Tomas and Monica Tranströmer, esteemed Academicians, Ladies and Gentlemen:

I bid you a warm welcome to the Swedish Academy and this presentation marking the year's Nobel Prize in Literature!

Good poetry is a powerful thing. It can change our picture of the world, making it clearer, sharper, more comprehensible. And forever.

We should not be taken in by the understated tone of Tomas Tranströmer's poetry. Several of the real wonders of our existence are constantly present: Memory, History, Death, Nature — nature not least. But each not as an overwhelming exterior presence, nor as something that assumes life under our gaze. In your work it is the very opposite: Ego, the individual, is the prism into which everything is drawn. It gives us a feeling of context, even obligation.

Dear Tomas, it is impossible to feel insignificant after having read your poetry. Neither is it still possible to love the world for the wrong reasons.

But what makes great poetry great is not only that it clarifies or reveals something already present in our world, but also that it has the ability to actually widen the boundaries of that world. Therein lies its power.

Paul Valéry — one of those renowned men of letters who would have been given the Nobel Prize had not death been too hasty — once said, approximately, that “words are more a part of us than our nerves. I know my mind solely through hearsay.” This is for better and for worse. Where a person's language ends, so does that person's world. But while the physical world is what it is, possessing definite limits — ultimately in the form of, let us say, the speed of light or absolute zero or the simple fact that life is given only at the cost of death — the world of language has limits that actually permit extension, movement, expansion. And those who conduct the vital but difficult explorations of this *terra incognita* are generally the great poets, such as Tomas Tranströmer. “The endless expanses of the human mind are shrunk to the size of a fist”.

So it is with especial gratitude that we stand before you on a day such as this. Because you have made our world far richer and far, far larger.