

Szyborska, Two Monkeys by Breughel

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Two Monkeys by Brueghel

(trans. from the Polish by Magnus Kryski)

Wisława Szymborska

I keep dreaming of my graduation exam:
in a window sit two chained monkeys,
beyond the window floats the sky,
and the sea splashes.

I am taking an exam on the history of mankind:
I stammer and flounder.

One monkey, eyes fixed upon me, listens ironically,
the other seems to be dozing--
and when silence follows a question,
he prompts me
with a soft jingling of the chain.

Pieter Brueghel the Elder, Two Monkeys (1562)

Oil on canvas, approximately 8 inches x 9 inches. Dahlem Museum, Berlin.

