**Lyudmila Sharko**

**GENDER, NATURE, CULTURE**, YMG 154

Department of Gender Studies

Faculty of Humanities

Charles University

May 04, 2020

**Week 11: Weather writing (03.05.2020)**

I am woken up at dawn by singing of birds. I lay in bed with eyes closed for some time listening to birds’ voices sounding like… I try to find analogy to describe the birds’ songs in language… sounding like may be crystal or silver bells? No, human language is too poor to relay all the beauty of sounds.

I come up to the window, open it wider and look out.

There is a green hill in front of my window, several meters from the house across a narrow one-lane road with a zebra crossing. Hill’s shape is almost perfect with symmetrical slopes so it looks like man-made. Here I catch myself thinking that it is a human’s stereotype to believe that a natural object cannot be perfect. Is it so? Look at the enormous variety of flowers, their shapes, colors or, for instance, at a color pattern of the male Mandarin duck’s feathers. Aren’t these creations perfectly made without any involvement of human masterful hands?

There is a narrow curving strip of thick brushes and trees, mostly lilac, climbing up the hill to the top and forming a dividing line between the southern and northern slopes.

The sun rises and a southern side of the hill gradually turns yellow: dandelions open up to greet the sun. Starlings singing in the trees, but I wait for a different sound. There is a pheasant living in the hill’s tree strip and it utters a cracking sound from time to time. Sometimes I see how it comes out of the thick growth to the hill top and walks there for a while and then disappears back to the same spot. I guess it is a female, who has its nest there in the thick tree cover. May be one day I will see it with little pheasant chicks? But it is the third day today that I haven’t heard it and I am worrying. May be people who frequently climb up the hill and sitting there scared the bird and it left the nest?

I look to the left and see a long-legged hare crossing the road in front of the house along the zebra crossing. It hops to the grass near the road at the hill foot and then disappears in the strip of trees on the hill. I wonder why hares here cross the road along the zebra crossing? I’ve seen it several times. Why not in other places? Just another riddle the nature offers us to crack.

At the hill foot there is a small structure, housing electric transformers. But it houses also unwelcomed guests – a family of small black bats. They look scary even from the distance and I seriously think that I need to install a net on the window to guard from them by chance flying inside my room.

People. The hill has a daily portion of human visitors. A lonely figure of a man standing on top as an incarnation of solitude; a girl making selfie; the young and the old using the slopes and a training ground, running or climbing up and going down for the sake of exercise. I see a woman with a five or six-year old girl. They both are pulling and breaking the branches of lilac growing on the hill. A woman holds a bunch of twigs with lilac blooms in her hand and posing for her daughter to take pictures. I am angry. Lilac flowers don’t live long once cut off the tree even if put in the water. In several hours they will die and this family will discard them without much thinking. Imagine how a Japanese would be horrified with such savagery. I bet this woman is my former compatriot from the Soviet Union. I remember every spring the trash containers near the houses filled with dead lilac branches. It was in the time of the Soviet Union, this habit remained after its death. Old habits die hard, especially destructive ones.

Suddenly a feeling of resentment emerges. People seem to be like some alien, disturbing element in the tranquility of the environment that includes the hill, and the blooming trees, and bumblebees and dandelions, and white tiny daisies hiding in the grass, starlings singing, a pheasant, a hare and the bats living under the transformer housing roof.

The day nears its end. The sun sets and the southern side of the hill again becomes green: dandelions closed for the night. I go out for a walk. At the hill foot under the trees a homeless man with a blue new mask on his face is shuffling his things and spreading a blanket like a nesting bird. Light breeze brings the delicious smell of blooming lilac, but this time this smell has an admixture of a foreign note: smells of the homeless man’s unbathed body, smoke and feces and what not. Here I again catch myself in a contradictory thought: why foreign? It is another stereotype and belief humans cherish so much that of a human’s superiority as a cultural being, foreign to the non-human animals. But if we look at the homeless people, drug addicts or alcoholics, or in what manner people kill each other or what they do with own children, we can see how thin that cultural skin is and how fragile. How quickly the human –”the crown of God's creation” – can sink into depravity and lose that cultural glitter. We are animals and still, after thousands of years of philosophical debates about what it means to be human, it is a good question if our developed brain is a blessing or a curse.

I walk along and think that the view from my window is like a real-time movie that helps the brain to capture and store the memory of intangible things: smells, emotions, atmosphere, or the essence of things.