

# POEM - POEM

## SUSAN BASSNETT Flying to Siberia

Behind the curve of the earth  
a sudden lightning flash.  
If I keep travelling  
will the world end?

There are bears below me  
bears with sharp claws  
roaming the forests.  
I sip a glass of wine  
I stare out into clouds.

Why does that name reverberate?  
Siberia, Siberia.  
It is a word of terror  
the end of hope, the end  
of freedom.  
Men have done this.  
To geese migrating  
Siberia is home.

Goodbye, I said.  
Stiffly I said, goodbye.  
It was not what I meant to say,  
but there was no other word.  
We did not touch.  
That word, goodbye,  
rang in the street like iron.

Sverdlovsk, Chelyabinsk,  
Omsk, Novosibirsk,  
Krasnoyarsk, Irkutsk.  
The names hiss and groan  
like ice-floes clashing.

Siberia is cold.  
Permafrost grips the earth.  
You cannot dig graves out here.  
Dead souls drift in the wasteland.  
This is my country.

I shall become a goose woman.  
I shall fly over the forests.  
My webbed feet will skim the tundra.  
My beak will stab at the soil.  
I shall speak with my wings  
and abandon you and your language.

SUSAN BASSNETT (Britain) is a writer and poet. Her poem collection *Imagining Asia* will be published shortly. Susan is a contributing editor of *New Theatre Quarterly*, she writes for *The Guardian* and *The Independent* and teaches Comparative Literature at Warwick University.