

by Niels Hav

MY FANTASTIC PEN

I prefer writing
with a used pen found in the street
or with a promotional pen, gladly one from the electricians,
the gas station or the bank.
Not just because they are cheap (free),
but I imagine that such an implement
will fuse my writing with industry
the sweat of skilled labourers, administrative offices
and the mystery of all existence.

Once I wrote meticulous poems with a fountain pen
- pure poetry about purely nothing
but now I like shit on my paper
tears and snot.

Poetry is not for sissies!
A poem must be just as honest as the Dow Jones index
- a mixture of reality and sheer bluff.
What has one grown too sensitive for?
Not much.

That's why I keep my eye on the bond market
and serious pieces of paper. The stock exchange
belongs to reality - just like poetry.
And that's why I'm so happy about this ball point pen
from the bank, which I found one dark night
in front of a closed convenience store. It smells
faintly of dog piss, and it writes fantastically.

NONSENSE DETECTOR

The advantage of speaking a dialect is that words are spoken and lived, before they are thought and written. Dialects have no other purpose than to handle the endless stream of things and situations reality is screwed together from.

All talk that isn't about real things is actually nonsense. And pathetic nonsense doesn't thrive well in a dialect. All dialects have inbuilt nonsense detectors. That's why very few people with political ambitions speak with a dialect.

For the same reason it would probably be useful to translate some new poems into dialect. The ones that stand up to that treatment are prob'ly not s'bad..

Of course even in dialect it is possible to call a shovel a spade or a spade a shovel. But it wouldn't work for long. Most people who speak a dialect have held one in their hands.

IN DEFENSE OF POETS

What are we to do about the poets?
Life's rough on them

they look so pitiful dressed in black
their skin blue from internal blizzards

Poetry is a horrible disease,
the infected walk about complaining
their screams pollute the atmosphere like leaks
from atomic power stations of the mind. It's so psychotic
Poetry is a tyrant
it keeps people awake at night and destroys marriages
it draws people out to desolate cottages in mid-winter
where they sit in pain wearing earmuffs and thick scarves.
Imagine the torture.

Poetry is a pest
worse than gonorrhoea, a terrible abomination.
But consider poets it's hard for them
bear with them!
They are hysterical as if they are expecting twins
they gnash their teeth while sleeping, they eat dirt
and grass. They stay out in the howling wind for hours
tormented by astounding metaphors.
Every day is a holy day for them.

Oh please, take pity on the poets
they are deaf and blind
help them through traffic where they stagger about
with their invisible handicap
remembering all sorts of stuff. Now and then one of them stops
to listen for a distant siren.
Show consideration for them.

Poets are like insane children
who've been chased from their homes by the entire family.

Pray for them
they are born unhappy
their mothers have cried for them
sought the assistance of doctors and lawyers, until they had to give up
for fear of losing their own minds.
Oh, cry for the poets!

Nothing can save them.
Infested with poetry like secret lepers
they are incarcerated in their own fantasy world
a gruesome ghetto filled with demons
and vindictive ghosts.

When on a clear summer's day the sun shining brightly
you see a poor poet
come wobbling out of the apartment block, looking pale
like a cadaver and disfigured by speculations
then walk up and help him.
Tie his shoelaces, lead him to the park
and help him sit down on the bench
in the sun. Sing to him a little
buy him an ice cream and tell him a story
because he's so sad.
He's completely ruined by poetry.

EPIGRAM

You can spend an entire life
in the company of words
not ever finding
the right one.

Just like a wretched fish
wrapped in Hungarian newspapers.
For one thing it is dead,
for another it doesn't understand
Hungarian.

Translated by P.K. Brask & Patrick Friesen

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