

Visit

I dreamt Deerlijk no longer existed.
Here and there turquoise grass wantonly sprouted.
And at Gavermeer where once a mother
stood wondering if she just might or not,
orange refineries rose out of the ground.

I dreamt a village that no longer existed:
its houses, churches, tombstones ably cleared.
And that it was a hopeless task to live
where one is hemmed in by the dead
who're preying on a place to live

and the sad proof of ever having been born.
Here it was – in bygone days – I had to get
from home to school, from school to home,
simply too full for one who's just begun,
a child now shut out from its mother's womb.

How do you fill a hereafter?

You need angels, dead people and gods. Lead pencils,
tracing paper, along with photos of maltreated
orphans from a snowy orphanage. Violation of morals!
Step-gods, step-dead, step-seraphim!

For the hereafter is a step-sort of present.
You need pianos, dildos, dolls, fraudulence in
writing. And a great deal of knitting wool, toys and sweets.
You need angels, dead people and gods.

You don't need any silence, no. At each hereafter avalanches
and loudness fit just fine. Things that rattle, squeak,
crunch and clatter. You don't need any children or
frogs. No God for sure. And least of all: poetry.

Dying out

When old men natter about young women,
from the corners of their eyes there seeps the listless
light of babes in arms that miss their bottle,
a dummy comforter or their mummy's teat.

Much more than in their lower regions
almost all is enacted in their heads:
all of that long-drawn-out and musty past,
those tame desires and those insipid kisses.

When old fogeys natter about young women,
their hands as of their own accord will flutter,
their eyes will flicker, and their brains will stutter:
they have at last decided to begin.

Terminal lovers

Terminal lovers make the best lovers.
Yet one more time they fresh themselves up with dew
of heaven, small swoons, old puppy loves,
yet one more time they soap each other's backs
with tears from an anaemic child.

The first and the last forge reckless plans
down in the bodies of terminal lovers.
There's something that compels them to empty their pockets,
to lay down as ammunition on the table, alongside bunches
of keys, matches and chewing gum, their hearts as well.

Terminal lovers caress each other expansively and extensively
and languidly, as befits love's darlings. As if their limbs tire them
too much. As if those limbs are remote and hardly reachable.
As if it burdens them to make the trip from clever hair
to stupid toes. Begun with too much flesh on something fragile.

Mothers

You recognise them from far off and way back: constant commotion,
always that familiar fuss. Aren't we a trifle too cold
perhaps, that our coat ought to be buttoned up a bit more, that we
would do well to avoid those suspect friends. Et cetera,

et cetera. They are full of overdoses of caution,
of life-long et ceteras, stupid stowing of belly and bosom.
Fluorescent details, centuries-old with simplicity: sperm-stains that, with
dreamy eyes, they silently wash out the sheets of their sons,

girls that head over heels they have to erase from the women
they meanwhile have become. In good mothers there can be
colossal snowfalls, particularly when no one is expecting
it at all, early November, as soon as the dead shout victory.

They give young children scarves to wear and woolly mitts. Bananas.
Brave words to combat tears. And from their own mothers who slip
increasingly away from them become the last of mothers. Till they
distrust the hands that are no longer able to hold on to them.

November does not arrive, it falls. Like evening.
Air transfers its deepest red into leaves of beech and oak.
And due to everything that they can hold no longer, it leaves off:
their world full of et cetera, et cetera and unto death.

Tongues

For Jozef Deleu

Take a mother,
a mother of good quality.
Pull her tongue out.
Then put her away again.
After that take a child,
it too of good quality,
a child that can scarcely say *mamma*.
Pull its tongue out.

Repeat the process often enough
to get a number of tongues sufficient
to acquire a language.
A lot of tongues are needed for one language.
For every language is both cruel and tender
like nitric acid for corpses.

Thus is created what one calls *a mother language*.
All kinds of countries have such, for sure.
One hears, even in distant climes, when woken
excellent mother languages being spoken.

Snip off the mother from the mother language,
separating the mother once more from the language.
(With too much mother there's a threat of gibberish.)
By no means though should she be thrown away,
as later she can still be made some use of.
Just simply set her on one side a while,
one that's nice and cool of course.
Stay silent.

Mix the futile with the subtle,
the sublime with the imbecile.
Mix the smell of rutting with that of rotting,
the perfect with the perverse,
all of this in equal measure.

And then, but only then
and certainly no second earlier:
then speak.