There is no dresscode for poetry

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As a poet and as a teacher I find it kinda funny and I find it kinda sad, that a hoodie (Kapuzenjacke) serves as the metaphorical symbol of a debate about contemporary poetry. The hoodie is a piece of comfort clothing, but also the expression of a lifestyle. It is so much, that one and a half pages is not enough to explain the significance of a hoodie. The polish literature critic Andzej Franaszek uses the symbol of a hoodie for … for what exactly? He seems to label contemporary poetry after Miłosz and Herbert as hoodie-poetry. But what does that mean? He seems to explain it, but I want to show, that he didn’t explain anything but himself.

I think the phrases “back in my days” or “in the old times” … not to mention “back in the good times” are highly suspicious. These sentences are often used against the younger generation. This younger generation happens to often wear hoodies. But the older generation, which likes to be taken seriously. So, they dress in suites or shirts or I don’t know and don’t really care. But I care for the difference, for the dialectics. People who thrive for seriousness tend to forget that the most serious things like work, war or whammy, are often linked to (nearly) ridiculous personal stories. There is no war without a personal story: Did I turned of the stove as I walked into battle with a broom? The everyday life can be highly absurd. I can read poetry in a hoodie and feel like I am in a whole different place right now. Seriousness is not the absence of funny situations, but its requirement.

The stiff serious characters often forget, that the art in the times of their upbringing is constitutional for them as a human being. “Back in my days the music was better” is an alarming sentence that even me is already using it at 30 years old. And the older generation wears no hoodies, cause serious business wears suites of I don’t know what else. Or at least this folks are not familiar with the hoodie (are they with poetry?). – If the hoodie will (and I think it will) get accepted as a formal way of clothing, the next youth would find new ways of estranging themselves. Ernst Bloch said that the youth is an origin of power and endurance for change, cause they are not used to the ways of the world as the older generation is. The youth is still adapting, and young people tend to think: why not change some things for the better. And Bloch really believes that that’s the strength of the youth, it can change the standard cause it is not used to it. As well I tend to think that the naivety of the youth is the chance to give at given circumstances with a new perspective.

What is the hoodie as a symbol for poetry? Some people like it cosy? Some like it casual? Informal? Poetry must contain tears, sweat and blood argues Franaszek. In my opinion poetry have to evoke tears, sweat and blood. But evocation can always go wrong. I have to admit that a long time Herberts poems didn’t provoke any feeling in me, sometimes tingled some intellectual references. I needed time to get used to it and after that to discover it. Good poetry can be comfortable like a cosy hoodie, but it is also an obstacle. Let me explain: To cry, I need not just the emotion but to overcome my own intend not to cry. – if you refer to sweat and blood just as bodily functions at this point, we are missing the poetry debate completely. Sometimes admitting my own feelings or let them run free is a task of overcoming myself, and poetry (or music or art) can be a helping hand, that’s what I learned in life.

Fierdorczuk said something very important in her response to Franaszek. Reading Poetry can be enjoyable. I enjoy contemporary poetry. I know friends who enjoy anticient poetry and some will dislike these. But as she and also I stated: it is something that has to cultivated. To like a poem doesn’t mean to know how to read poetry. Poems and poetry differ at times.

I dislike wearing hoodies, some people love it, but people who dislike the wearer of hoodies will dislike their opinions and therefore hide their own to make them incontestable. While the wearer of hoodies often will seek for a possibility to think outside the hood, the people who criticise the hoodie can never change the perspective of dislike. As a teacher I often ask my students, what are their favourites of the month. I am stuck in my old ways and they are comfortable for me. But to walk a new way will always be hard at first. Comprehension is never a candy bar eaten behind the safety of a hood. It is hard work and sometimes I get why my students like some stuff and sometimes I will not get it. But I will try to comprehend the appeal. Also, I try to teach them some of my favourites (of the years). Sometimes we will argue, sometimes agree. I accept that they don’t have to think and feel my way(see Gutorow). Still I lived a completely other life. Maybe that’s the lesson for older Generations: don’t hold to tight on your views, you will crush them with the love of your bare hands. It is always easy to despise someone who is different for being different. Sometimes I get the impression that the wearer of the hoodie tries to find something to appreciate in the world through focus. While the person who despise the hoodie will focus on the hoodie and ignore the world around.

I don’t need to wear a hoodie to get the appeal and respect a way I am not familiar with. And I also already think that my view of generations is paternalistic. It is said, every generation has its own problems. But what if every human being has its own problems and the generational are on top? Every human being cries, sweats and bleeds. There I can find an appeal to wear a Kaputzenjacke… without pockets even, so I have to handle my world myself. Lets not forget, there is no dresscode for reading poetry. Let there be youth and let there be chaos.