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PAVOL JANIK (Slovakia)



Mgr. art. Pavol Janik, PhD., was born in 1956 in Bratislava, where he also studied film and television dramaturgy and scriptwriting at the Drama Faculty of the Academy of Performing Arts (VŠMU). He has worked at the Ministry of Culture (1983-87), in the media and in advertising. In 1998 he became the secretary of the Slovak Writers' Society (Spolok slovenských spisovateľov) and since 2003 he has been its president. He has received a number of awards for his literary and advertising work both in his own country and abroad.

Notable Collections of poems: Nezarúčené správy (Undelivered Reports, 1981), Zrkadlo na konci leta (A Mirror at the End of Summer, 1984), Do videnia v množnom čísle (Goodbye in the Plural, 1985), Hurá, horí!, (Hurrah, It's Burning! 1991), Niekto ako boh (Someone Like God, 1998), Buď vôňa tvoja (Thy Scent Be Here, 2002), Kmitočet tvojich bokov (The Oscillations of Your Hips, 2002) | Collections of aphorisms: Dobrá zrada nad zlato (Good Advice is Worth More Than Gold, 1996), Satanovisko (Satan's Place, 1999), Pes hore bez (A Topless Lark, 101 larks, 2000), Špinavé čistky (Dirty Purges, 2002) **Dramatic works:** Tuctová komédia (s manželkou Oľgou) (Commonplace Comedy (with his wife, Olga), 1986), Súkromný striptíz (A Private Striptease, 1993), Maturitný oblek (A School Graduation Suit, 1994), Nežná klauniáda (A Tender Farce, 2004).

Pavol Janik's plays in Canada : A collection of three plays by the Slovak dramatist Pavol Janik has been published in a Canadian university periodical, the Toronto Slavic Quarterly, under the title of "Dangerous Comedies" translated into English by Heather Trebatická. The periodical is available on-line:

<http://www.utoronto.ca/tsq/09/index09.shtml>

Six poems by Pavol Janik

ASTONISHMENT

I stretch out the water
in which you are reflected.
With a shout to stop
all possible outflows.

I address you by breath
such release of speech.
Until you are glassy with ice before me
as before a draught.

Tirelessly you quiver under the numb surface
and on the bottom for a moment gleam
so that I glimpse the day,
which will only light up in you.

KOSOVO

A burning
paper Goethe
prays
in Serb
for four hundred dead children

In Schiller's stone eye
gleams a tear of mercury

There's a Gypsy weeping
for a little Romany fairy
at the bottom of the Adriatic

Blood
has an irresistible color
of the bluish dusk of the sky
from which falls
light and glitterings

THE THEATER OF LIFE

Life which means only the theater --
such life we always wish to play.
If just now you've got a funny thought
change into your clown's suit.

Life sways with us like a pendulum --
it runs from mud into a puddle.
It never is as it used to be
is a truth well-tried from age to age.

Time is like a glass filled to the brim
again and again it runs over.
It ourselves that step on our heels
and we wish to find the person inside us.

There are patches on curtain and the soul...
At the end death gives checkmate.
Yet it's still worth playing the game,

like a gust of May rain
to fertilize the wounded earth.

you should be glad that at least you've existed.

Life has found a mirror on the stage --
it comes alive in it every night.
if something has lured into the theater
let's move into ancient times.

Settle into your empty seat,
learn life by heart.
If you yawn during life
then ask for your entrance fee back.

FAMILY STUDY

Always when I think of you
dawn breaks above Buenos Aires
and the Atlantic has the inexplicable color of your eyes.

Exotic birds
nest on out TV aerial
until the announcer
has a pearly hairdo
and complete blonde smile.
She claims that eternity has already lasted a whole year.
The weather forecast
announces in her place
a rainbow parrot.

For our wedding route
it wishes us little cloudiness
and success at least as large as the discovery of America
or the record flight of the ostrich from Australia
to the zoological gardens of Europe.

Always when I think of you
dawn breaks above Buenos Aires
and the wind whirls the pamphlets
of all the airlines in the world.

The Atlantic does not admit any other continent.
It's clear as a stone of precious clarity.

Despite its twinkling depth it resembles a question
which posed passionately by your body.

NEW YORK

In a horizontal mirror
of the straightened bay
the points of an angular city
stabbing directly into the starry sky.

In the glittering sea of lamps
flirtatious flitting boats
tremble marvellously
on your agitated legs
swimming in the lower deck
of a brocade evening dress.

Suddenly we are missing persons
like needles in a labyrinth of tinfoil.

Some things we take personally --
stretch limousines,
moulting squirrels in central Park
and the metal body of dead freedom.

In New York most of all it's getting dark...

The glittering darkness lights up.

The thousand-armed luster of the mega city
writes Einstein's message about the speed of light
every evening on the gleaming surface of the water.
And again before the dusk the silver screen
of the New York sky floods
with hectolitres of Hollywood blood.

YOU CAN TELL AN ANGEL FROM HIS FEATHERS (For my parents who are not yet - departed-)

In my innermost display cases
all my glassy memories tremble.

At the end of silence to hear last year's rain
how it dictates whispering
its incomprehensible telegram
A pack of sad angels
howl in the light of the moon

The river falls from weariness,
the mortal spirit of water
in it falls with ease
to the bottom

I feel mercury in my veins
after the explosion of blood
-- it's in my guts
supersonic angels
rise from the dead.

Their deafening engines
start up in my head.

When they take off
the deepest silence begins
in which perhaps I'll hear
distant pearls
how they pour on the parquets.

Children search tirelessly for an answer
till now unwritten in books
and cut out colorful pictures from it.

It happens at home
behind whose windows fireworks blaze every evening.

Always when I think of you
dawn breaks above Buenos Aires.
And today, too, the Atlantic is completely upset.
It's completely bashful
as its accustomed only to invisible phenomena.

Where does the empire of glass and marble reach?
Where do the slim rackets of the skyscrapers aim?

God buys a hot dog
at the bottom of a sixty-storey street.

God is a black
and loves the grey color of concrete.

His sun was born from himself
in a paper box
from the newest sort of slave.

A morning confession of frozen tears
freezes me
in my yet more Autumn eyes.

**Poems translated by
James Sutherland Smith**

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