

Humanity, a review of *Beware the Bourgeois Doomsday Fantasy* by Heath Brougher. Sandy Press. Queensland, Australia & California, USA. 2024. \$10.00 paper

Heath Brougher's *Beware the Bourgeois Doomsday Fantasy* is militant, not in a doctrine sense, but militant for humanity, militant for standing up for equality and human dignity, for the dignity of all living things; and against the inhumane, which, in these poems, takes shape in a police officer's baton used not to protect the public but to intimidate and inflict injury. Three underlying ideas in *Beware the Bourgeois Doomsday Fantasy* are: Obsession in poetry is good, censorship is bad, and stirring the reader into inclusivity is a must.

Poetry shouldn't go halfway; these poems go all the way. They follow through in that all of them rebel against abuse, stand up for justice, and "speak truth to power." Writing from his own experience, Heath Brougher is not only writing about himself but also about others who have been hit indiscriminately with the baton and then dismissed in courts where they sought justice. Brougher, a voice for the voiceless, is obsessed with being heard, with not keeping quiet. In "Gist," he is "the wielder of Truth—the one who scares the police shitless while also serving as their official punching bag ..." and obsessed in "Gist." With their batons

The regional police took my cartilage,
so I will take off the masks they wicked-wear
and expose them to the world.

The white space between the lines lends import to what the poet says and to his determination to take off those masks.

Censorship in speech as in writing is one way authority tries to control. Just as Brougher refuses to be silent, he refuses to be censored. Credit goes to his publisher, Sandy Press, for giving him free rein, for not censoring his voice, for not watering down his strong language; such watering down would significantly lessen the poems' impact. In "Grit," the poet says "They can shoot me but they cannot kill me." Nor can they silence his voice and censor his lines. In "Grace," he asks the police, "How often do you regionals actually help someone instead of preying and pounding on them to meet your bureaucratic quota?" The voice is "Ghats" is uncensored and strong.

AWAKEN Up! (pretend like I'm clapping my hands right in front of your face) AWAKEN Up (don't get Woke) but AWAKEN UP! AWAKEN THE FUCK UP! Awaken up you pathetically-pulsed American deathsuckers! AWAKEN UP! (now I'm nudging you!—the police and the sheepfold)

Language—straight with no chaser.

No poem should offend. If readers are offended, they stop reading. But good poems should provoke. They should stir, and make readers care, even though those readers might feel uneasy. Good poems often take readers "out of these comfort zone." "Gnar!" begins, "You are tantamount to the chaos and killing that occurs in spontaneous riots." And ends boldly, blatantly "I am the one whose head you will bash open." In his refusal to mince words, the poet provokes. His poems are calls to action: the status quo needs to go. In "Grandiloquent" he talks about integrity,

individuality, and self-actualization, traits that once meant something and today are “looked down upon!” That needs to change.

One important theme in numerous of these poems is that people often fear what they don't know. Brougher attributes this kind of fear to the regional police. Out of fear they react violently, not just toward him but toward others in the community, people often economically disadvantaged, who lack the means to defend themselves and fight back on the streets and in the courtroom. Heath Brougher in his poems fights back. He speaks not only about and for himself but also for many others in his region and in all places where authority is abused and that abuse is ignored.

Buy this book, read it, and see for yourself.