

## SONJA ÅKESSON

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### THE SNOUTHOG

*translated from the Swedish by Peter Graves and Janet Scott*

Everything must be obvious  
and capable of being used up.  
The snouthog wrinkles his serious eyebrows.  
Everything must be obvious, he says,  
and serviceable.

Words must be obvious e.g.  
e.g. over-obvious  
e.g. even under-obvious.  
They must be distended and full-blown  
and swarm with everything possible.  
What can you do with a word which is not obvious,  
which is not serviceable,  
completely and utterly?

The snouthog is also particular about  
words being fresh.  
Well, more or less fresh.  
He likes to sink his snout  
into something more or less fresh.  
“Gulls” e.g. and e.g. “stars,”  
they say nothing to him,  
they are used-up words.  
What’s the snouthog supposed to do with  
something already used up?  
(“Function” on the other hand, that’s his favourite word.  
Function!  
He rubs his hands with glee.)

The snouthog is up-to-date.  
Time is serviceable,  
the snouthog values that.

Women—the snouthog knows  
what to do with them all right.  
Ruth Hillarp.  
Ha-ha.  
The snouthog yawns  
so that he almost suffocates.

The snouthog knows  
how one should *balance* one’s feelings,  
*how one should make them functional*.  
He loves his snout e.g.  
The snout is serviceable,  
the snouthog values that.

The snouthog is always objective.  
If he cocks a snook at anyone  
it is justified.  
He is very democratic.

If the snouthog weren’t a snouthog  
he would like to be an owl.  
A modern, a swimming owl.  
But he has neither wings nor webbed feet.  
“Wings” e.g. anyway  
that is a used-up word.

The snouthog keeps his feet on the ground.  
He roots with his snout and rakes over.  
He saunters along on all his feet.  
His feet are obvious;  
the snouthog values that.

SONJA ÅKESSON (b. 1926, Gotland) published her first volume of poems in 1957 and since then has produced ten further books of poems and prose-pieces. She has also published one novel and a collection of short stories, in addition to a number of other works written in conjunction with her husband.

PETER GRAVES (b. 1942) lectures in Swedish at Aberdeen University and JANET SCOTT (b. 1948) is a post-graduate student there.

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