

One spring day in 2004 I felt especially drifting or goalless. Not the kind that's sad or a feeling ones live isn't going anywhere or something. It was more a form of joyful senselessness. The day had potency, things could happen, my mind was at ease, the sun was shining, the day just started. At that moment I realised the day had potential to become something, I was (as I often where) at that moment sitting behind my computer. Connected to the what we still then called the 'world wide web', even though that word was fading away every day it seems. I sat back in my chair, hands away from the keyboard, turned my head to the side looking out the window and decided I must go out the door, to... somewhere. I jumped out of my chair, walked through the corridor downstairs, and a moment later I was riding my bike with no particular direction in mind. I don't have this feeling often, that I should do something so spontaneous, let alone act upon it. It requires some sense of relax-full complacency which in our day-to-day hectic is easily over-flooded with another kind of urgency, stress, money, work, people, jobs, stuff most people must deal with, or otherwise probably the things will deal with them eventually.

As I was cycling, I felt drawn to steer off in a direction I seldom went, towards an industrial zone, I stumbled upon a big new second hand shop, one which I never saw before. My curiosity grew, and felt adamant I should go in, just to see what they offered.

A lot of things people once adorned their houses with, now sat awaiting new owners. Second hand shops somehow make me feel like they are a animal-pound but for things, even the things you deem ugly and under normal circumstances may go against your personal tastes, still those objects have lived, been admired or even loved maybe by a previous owner, who knows what stories some of these things could tell.

I was still in a mindset that the day was pregnant with possibility, but didn't feel at all inclined to pressure myself into yielding some result. In an observing manner I browsed through the things, discriminating everything against my personal affections or tastes, hoping something would cling on as if I where a magnet on a specific frequency and something could, no should stick to it as long I kept my mind in this state.

After the kettles, pottery, clothes and furniture, racks and racks of books. Old books about windows 95, outdated encyclopedias, photography books from an age when photography was mainly a skill and not an art-form yet, esoteric and religious books which I always imagine have either been thrown out in a spurt of slowly decaying disbelief, or someone cherished the contents within those pages till their last moment. And then, something stood out...

On the side of book a reference... to what I thought was a Wittgensteinian joke, or thought experiment by him.

This could be a philosophy book, but after picking it up I saw it was a novel. A young bravado face peered from its back-cover. David Foster Wallace, *The Broom of the System*. I knew that joke. It's about what constitutes a broom. The handle or the brush? The corner of my mouth turned upwards.

Never heard of the writer though and the price of the book was quite steep for a second hand book. 4 euro's, hmm... doubt, I was in one of those poor-artist fases, but seeing this problem seemed to be systemic, money couldn't be an argument against it I figured. I took the book home, read it. And decided that money was the best money I ever spent.

That is how David Foster Wallace came into my life, and I I'm certain I changed me for the better.

I was caught by his short story titled *Good Old Neon* in the book *Oblivion*. And wondered how those words would look like in... *Neon*.

I wondered if there was a manuscript of it, I did some research, and found out the Harry Ransom centre in Austin Texas have handwritten manuscripts of most of David Foster Wallace his work, and luckily also this one. So the words behind me say *Good Old Neon*, in *Neon*, in Wallace's his own handwriting.

You might be wondering about the story... it deals with a lot of existential thoughts and some people relate this story to Wallace' own death. I'll let you be the judge of that, but will give you a small taste first.

I remember getting chills down my spine when reading the first sentences. Which I'll read to you:

My whole life I've been a fraud. I'm not exaggerating. Pretty much all I've ever done all the time is try to create a certain impression of me in other people. Mostly to be liked or admired. It is a little more complicated than that, maybe. But when you come right down to it it is to be liked, loved. Admired, approved of, applauded, whatever. You get the idea.

If you like to hear more, there is an audio narration of next to the *neon*.

I want to thank you for your time and attention and will leave you with this quote by someone Wallace himself liked to quote, namely Kurt Vonnegut, which I thought was appropriate in the context of *Good Old Neon*:

We are what we pretend to be, so we must be careful about what we pretend to be.