

Drago Glamuzina

Butchers

Translated from Croatian by Damir Šodan

Fisherman's Talk¹

again I cast light lures
inside of myself
sometimes it seems
I'm merely enjoying the boredom
like a pebble thrown in the water
creating a ripple effect
for a brief while
on the other hand sometimes I'm an Argonaut
on a search
for the search is everything
yet there is in the soul a desire for not thinking
for being still

¹ The title is a reference to *Fishing and Fishermen's Talk*, a classic work by the famous Croatian Renaissance writer Petar Hektorović (1487 – 1572), who was born and died in Starigrad on the isle of Hvar. Hektorović, who is considered one of the forefathers of modern Croatian literature, also wrote in Italian and Latin.

Brač Frowning²

Brač is frowning behind your back
even though it's not raining
and you are sad and in love
while I'm bothered by the fingers
of the man cutting my hair,
though they are as soft, warm and tender
as the fingers of the woman
who usually does it.
You've come to see her touching me,
you wanted to know what world it
came from, that pleasure so small, pure
and trivial, that I told you
about, only to observe my malevolence
now surging up in the mirror.
So you lift up a lock of your hair
and place it underneath your nose
like a moustache,
holding it there until
I smile again.

² Brač is an island in the Adriatic, within Croatia, the largest island in Dalmatia.

**It's Early In the Morning
and We Are Doing This Thing Together**

So early it's still almost dark out.
We are throwing out books
from your library
given to you by your former lovers,
those with and without inscriptions.
One can't really say we're not aware
of the futility of this undertaking,
but still we laugh and curse
as we rip them apart
dumping them in the garbage.
It's early in the morning
and we are doing this thing together.

What We Talk About When We Talk About Love

She loved him and he
loved her too. Then a Turk with a ponytail
stole her and almost raped her.
I say *almost* because
she eventually spread her legs willingly.
She liked the wild Turk
who cuts heads as if they'd been purposely
grown in his own yard,
who grabs everything as if he owns it,
who now rejects her and sleeps
outside the tent waiting for her to summon
him in and surrender.

Then her husband found them,
a husband completely different from
your own.
As they struggled in a clinch gasping for air
they requested that she slice with a sword
the one she didn't love.
As difficult as it was,
she first swung at her husband.
Perhaps she thought that he would never
forgive her so instead of choosing one of them,
she chose herself,
or maybe because the wild Turk
took her somewhere where lasting love
never could.

Ultimately, Franco Nero killed Dragan
Nikolić³, and took his wife home,
with the Turk's flower on her forehead.
Not allowing her father to blind her
with a scorching sword.
His love was stronger than the law
and her attempt to kill him.
Self-assured and confident it enveloped them
like this blanketed wrapped up around us.

³ The poem refers to scenes from the ex-Yugoslav historical movie „Banović Strahinja“ (internationally released under the title „The Falcon“) directed by Vatroslav Mimica (1981), starring two very popular European actors at the time, the Serbian Dragan Nikolić and the Italian Franco Nero.

An Afternoon with My Son

today I took my son downtown
he saw the people I work with,
both of my bosses, him and her,
he had pizza with me and my mistress,
and asked me why I yell at her.
then he kissed me.
to show he'd taken my side.
then he ran through the square,
fell asleep on the tram,
finally coming back home
overwhelmed with a world
he couldn't understand
but one that surely found a place
somewhere inside
him.

Like a Frotteur on a Tram

you wait for her on the street
where she's supposed to pass by,
then you shake yourself off like a wet dog and
begin following her, stalking her around town
and observing her walk.

watching her entering stores, talking to
saleswomen, buying newspapers,
squeezing against others on the tram.

then you remember her husband,
how you were horrified by a man
who monitors his wife's phone calls.

ridden with heavy guilt you make
your way towards her through the crowd,
pressing yourself against her back,
like the frotteur she once told you about,
waiting for her to turn around.

She Baby Talks to Me in Serbian

it's early morning and she forces me
to work, baby talking to me in Serbian:
you are my poet, claiming she would,
like Nietzsche's sister, keep me locked up
in the room until I finally write
something down.

I sit in front of the computer,
she sits down on our red three-seater
that we bought on credit, overwhelmed with joy,
believing its softness would bring us
back together –
its dents making us slide down
next to each other more often.

then she reads what I've written

Chewing Tobacco

we were struggling with a pile of dirty dishes,
the remains of last night's party,
discussing our friends,
their compulsive behaviour,
talking about someone's thigh constantly
pressed up against her leg, his jealous wife,
her moustache...

it's not that we don't love them,
we would give an arm and a leg to some of them,
but objectively speaking, we were bad-mouthing
them like sailors sitting at the rear of the ship
commenting on the whores after they made
their rounds of the port bars:
the moon is high, the sea is rocking below,
they chew on tobacco, their balls emptied,
spitting over the railing
after each sentence.

I Kiss Her, She Kisses Him, He Kisses Me

I kiss her, she kisses him, he kisses
me. simultaneously,
so our three noses are continuously
touching each other.
that's the game invented by our
three-and-a-half year old son,
lying between us,
on the bed
listening to us
having a fight.

I Should Go to the Kitchen, Take a Knife and Cut Up Those Letters

it's been six years already since we bought this apartment but I've only noticed them a few days ago – those letters carved into the bathroom door frame – “Boris”.

Boris was the son of the man who sold us the flat, a Serb in love with a Croatian girl and together they jumped off the top of the building in 1993, landing right down below our window. Boris's parents later moved out of town, so we heard the story from the neighbours. we didn't like the fact that we would be living in the apartment that was sold only because its owner loved a forbidden woman. but we were unaware of this when we bought it, plus we had been renting for eight years, so we mortgaged ourselves up to our necks to afford it – we protected ourselves by converting the place into a home.

sometimes we would tell the story to our guests, but only occasionally, in all seriousness and with reverence, also – I admit it – as a bizarre account to keep a limping conversation going.