

Goran Simic

My Accent

I love my accent, I love that wild sea
which attacks my weak tongue.
It doesn't reside in the morning radio news
as much as in the rustle of the job offer flyers
stapled to the street poles.
In my accent you can find my past,
the different me who still talks with imagined fish
in a glass of water.

My grandfather was a fisherman
and I grew up on a dock
waiting for him to come back.
He built a gigantic aquarium when I was born
and every time he brought a fish
he named it immediately by some word I had to learn
until the next came... next came... next came.
I remember the first two were called "I am"
and after that the beauty of language came to me
through the shining scales.
I learned watching the aquarium
and recognizing the words by the silent colours.
After returning home
my grandfather would spend whole nights
making sentences by combining the fish
who would pass each other.
It's how I learned to speak.

I left the house the day my grandfather went
fishing for a black fish he was missing
and never came back.

Now I am sitting in the middle of my empty room
as in an aquarium
and talking with the ghosts of the fish
I used to recognize as words,
talking with the shadows floating
over the flyers ripped off street poles.

"I love my accent...
I love my accent..."
I repeat it again and again
so as not to ask myself:

Who am I now.
Am I real or just the black fish
my grandfather failed to catch.