

Daqsxejn ta' Requiem lil Leli

Immanuel Mifsud

Contents

Excerpt in Maltese	1
English translation by Albert Gatt	4

Excerpt in Maltese

I

Raġel qed tmut, x'int tistħajjel bħalissa?
l'hemm ommok tistenna b'vavalor f'idha
ħalli xħin tasal quddiemha timsaħlek
id-dawra ta' ħalqek miċ-ċikkulata?
Hux dik ċikkulata li kellha f'idha
l-infermiera tal-uniformi kaħla;
dik t'għajnejha kbar suwed, xagħarha nokkli;
dik li kellha l-friefet iduru f'rasha?
Hux ċikkulata li kellha f'idejha?

Qiegħed tismagħni nkellmek? Qed tagħrafni?
Min hemm, taħseb, li qiegħed jistenniek?
Ommok? Liebsa maktur abjad ma' rasha,
għajnejha fil-ħofra; għajnejha ħofor.

Bieb magħluq qed jitbexxaq, qed jinfetaħ,
issa beraħ, u tista' tara 'l ommok
tidħaqlek bit-tbissima tal-pitturi.
Isa, xejrilha ħa tara li rajtha
u hi xxejjirlek lura u tidħaqlek.
"Is' ejja għand il-mamma sabiħ tiegħi!"

“Istra kif għadda, għosfor daż-żmien kollu!
Kemmi kont ili ma narak u nisimgħek.
Għidli storja! Għidli storja għax nibki!”

Ara min tfaċċa maġenb ommok. Fares:
dak ir-raġel twil li kont ilek toħlom.
Arah bi driegħu jdawwar spallejn ommok.

II

Raġel qed tmut, x'int tistħajjel bħalissa?
Il-baħar imċafċaf? Dgħajsa titbandal?
Tistħajjel dik il-gżira bil-blat għoli
fejn kulħadd jimxi sieket bla jgħid kelma?
Fejn m'hemmx storbu; fejn m'hemmx ħsejjes hlief forsi
il-ħoss tal-ilma jdur bellus, jingabar
ma' truf għajnejk li bilkemm jistgħu jagħrfu
lil dawk in-nies li ġew jarawk imbikkma?
Raġel qed tmut, waslet iċ-ċorma sħabek:
qed jistennewk ħa tibda tilgħab magħhom –
dgħajjes tal-karti, suldati taċ-ċomb,
blalen tal-plastik u boċċi tal-ħġieġ,
dawra durella ... se tiġi għalik ...
ġejja għalik u ġejja għalik, ġejja ...!

III

Ej! Il-bieraħ ommi tatni sold. Sold!
Kien hemm il-ġostru fir-raħal ta' ħdejna:
kuluri jizzellġu, jidħlu f'xulxin.

Il-ġoetra ddu iddu; iddu u taġġad:
Iż-żiemel tal-injam b'għajnejhom kbar.
U tlajt fuq wieħed abjad – kollha bojod –
tilgħin u niżlin, iduru, iduru.

Ej! Il-bieraħ omni tatni sold. Sold!
U mort il-ġoetra fuq iż-żiemel bojod
li bdew iduru, iduru, biex fl-aħħar
waqfu, u qadbet nieżla ħalba xita
u ħassejt li saqajja bdew juġġuni,
jdejjja jirtogħdu, dahri tgħawweġ ganċ.

Ej! Il-bieraħ omni tatni sold. Sold!
Das-sold infaqtu kollu fuq il-ġoetra.
Tiela' w nieżel fuq žiemel tal-injam.
Imm' issa nixtieq nitlaq ħalli norqod.
Qed nittewweb w għajnejja qed jingħalqu.
Għajejt fuq dak iż-żiemel tal-injam.
U kemm hawn dlam, kemm waqa' dlam, xi kruha!
Il-ġoetra, kemm dort, riekeb fuq iż-żiemel,
jogħla u jinżel u jogħla u jinżel
u jdur ħalli jogħla biex jerġa' jinżel
iż-żiemel l-abjad li fuqu nfaqt sold!

Ibni, is-sold li tajtek x'għamilt bih?
Ma nafx. Forsi waqagħli minn ġol-but.
Jew mort il-ġoetra? Mort il-ġoetra, veru?
X'għamilt ibni, x'għamilt! Arak b'għajnejk
ħomor nirien u dahrek donnu tgħawweġ.
Ħares lejn xagħrek kif bjadlek, kif ħfieflek.
X'għamilt ibni, x'għamilt! Issa m'hemmx x'taġħmel.

English translation by Albert Gatt

I

Dying man, what is it you dream of now?
Is that your mother waiting, bib in hand
to wipe away the chocolate from your mouth
the moment you arrive to stand before her?
Wasn't it chocolate that she held, the nurse
who wore a uniform of navy blue;
whose eyes were large and dark, whose hair was curly;
whose head swirled with a mass of butterflies?
Wasn't it chocolate that she held, that nurse?

Can you hear me? Who am I, can you tell?
Who do you think is waiting there for you?
Your mother? With a white scarf 'round her head,
with eyes sunk into hollows, hollow-eyed?

That door was shut, it's op'ning now, ajar;
it's open wide and look, your mother's there
wearing the smile that painted figures wear.
Go on now, wave, so that she'll know you've seen her,
and she will smile as she waves back to you.
"Come to mamà, my darling, come to me!"
"It's been so long, how all this time has flown!
It's ages since I heard you last or saw you.
Tell me a story! A story or I'll cry!"

Now look: Who's that, who's turned up by your mother,
that tall man who's so often in your dreams.
His arms are draped around your mother's shoulders.

II

Dying man, what is it you dream of now?
A choppy, roiling sea? A rocking boat?
D'you fancy you can see the high-ridged island
where no one speaks a word but walks in silence?
Where there's no noise, no sound except perhaps
the velvet swirl of water as it pools
around the corners of your blank eyes peering
at dumbstruck visitors you barely know?
Dying man, your friends have come here in droves:
they're waiting for you to go out and play –
with paper boats and soldiers made of lead,
with plastic balls and marbles made of glass,
ringa ringa roses ... she's coming for you ...
she's coming, she's coming to take you away ...!

III

Hey! Mum gave me a penny yesterday. Yes!
There was a fair in the neighbouring village:
merry-go-round, a smudge of colours, bleeding.
The merry-go-round turns; it spins and turns:
those wide-eyed horses fashioned out of wood.
I rode a white one – every one is white –
and up and down they went, they turned and turned.

Hey! Mum gave me a penny yesterday. Yes!
I rode white horses on the merry-go-round
and round and round they turned, but then they stopped,

the rain began to pour and I could feel
my legs begin to ache, my hands to tremble,
my back had started bending like a hook.

Hey! Mum gave me a penny yesterday. Yes!
I spent my penny on the merry-go-round.
I rode a wooden horse, it rose and fell.
But now I'd like to leave and go to sleep.
I've started yawning and my eyelids droop.
I'm tired of sitting on that wooden horse.
And it's so dark, it's got so dark, so ugly!
I turned so much upon the merry-go-round,
my horse was rising, falling, rising, falling
and turning round to rise and fall again
the white horse that had cost me a whole penny!

Son, what happened to the penny I gave you?

Dunno. Perhaps it fell out of my pocket.

You didn't spend it on a ride, did you?

You did? How could you be so foolish son?

Your eyes are bloodshot now, your back is bent.

Your hair's gone white, it's lighter, falling out.

How could you be so foolish? It's too late.