



Djordje Milović

Heartsnatcher

Based on the novel by Boris Vian





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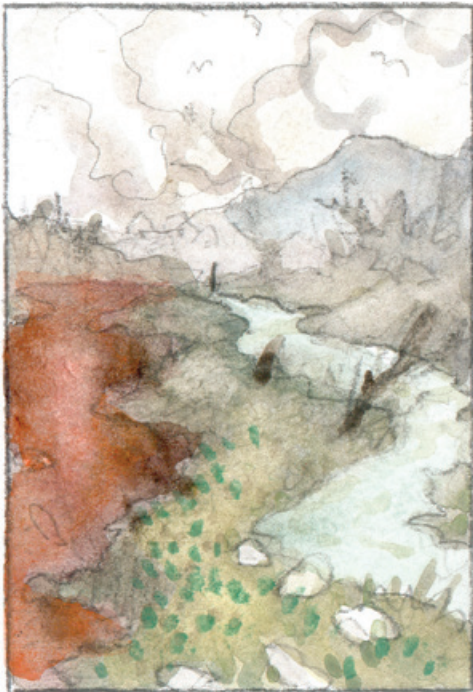
Djordje Milović belongs to the group of Serbian comics authors who quietly and steadily build and develop their style and do not care about what the current trends are. This self-imposed detachment allows the artist to create unburdened from contemporary demands. On the other hand, this refusal to actively participate in the local comics scene results in a lack of recognition that they deserve.

The defining feature of all of Milović's published works is the refined collaboration of delicate watercolour and philosophical and literary texts. This new 'story in pictures' by Djordje Milović, consistent with his previous interests, is based on the novel *Heartsnatcher* by Boris Vian (1920-1959), one of the most original writers of the twentieth century. Vian

was, in many ways, a remarkable artist, whose interests ranged from poetry, theatre of the absurd, bizarre fiction, mysteries, abstract and provocative thrillers that upset the public and even caused a trial (the novel *Spit On Your Graves* was published in 1946, as Vian's alleged translation of a non-existent American writer Vernon Sullivan, which was actually his pseudonym), composing, writing articles for various publications, translating science fiction to being a jazz trumpet virtuoso. He lived intensely, without calculations, provoking those who have declared themselves as his enemies, creating fervent admirers and, finally, provoking his own untimely death.

The novel *Heartsnatcher* was published in 1953 and is characterised by a continuous shift away from common sense and a betrayal of normal patterns of behaviour that, overall, results in the reader feeling a sense of lightness and dizziness caused by the lack of recognizable points of support. The story works on several levels: appearance, which no matter how disjointed and absurd, is followed by his allegorical logic, in which, in a subsequent analysis, reveals levels with generally accepted principles and ideas and, not last, a ludicrous level which satisfies playing with the plot and denouement.

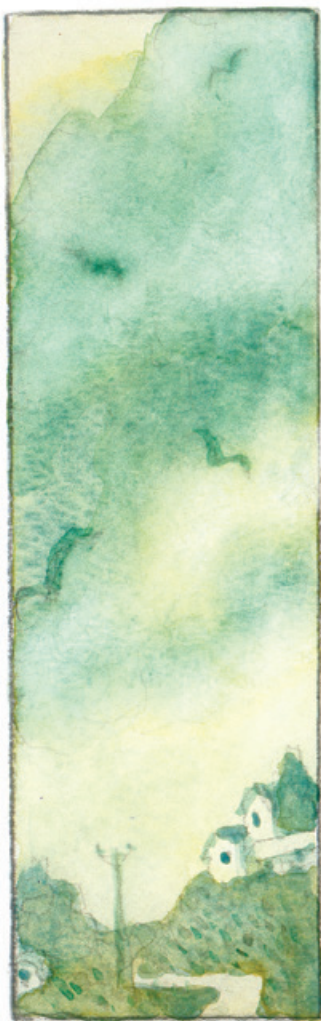
Timortis is a foreigner, who finds himself in a hypothetical unnamed village on the coast and moving through it meets (as do the readers) some bizarreness in what is supposed to be 'ordinary' and everyday life. Behind the facade of a pastoral province hide many unresolved concerns: from the sale of elders in the market (possibly as slaves?) and the attitude of the villagers towards the priest, to a mother whose pathological need to protect their children means she refuses to hand them over to the



Psychological landscape

world for which they were created. These pressures will, of course, cause and give birth to a new form of resistance and the search for different paths of development. The children soul's will learn to fly away from their mother's nest-prison until they are trapped in a glass cube from which there is no escape nor life.

Out of all the bizarre things Timortis comes across, surely the most bizarre is the red river of shame that runs through the village that has carcass or body parts (which they no longer need?!) thrown into it. From there, with his teeth (and only his teeth) the



Notice of change



Heavy shadows

unfortunate Slavo is endowed/cursed to carry the shame and suffering of all the villagers. Although unhappy with what he sees and what he must do, Slavo the boatman, is the embodiment of helpless, useless and self-destructive humanity, doing his job in fatalistic dedication and sacrifice that will not soften even with all the gold the villagers pay him.

For his part, not even the foreigner Timortis is without his own sins and ambitions. He is there to 'psychoanalyse' but after seven years, three months and two days has no result. His enthusiasm disappears and is replaced by shame – the most widespread human emotion. So he decides to take Slavo's place cleaning the river of shame.

Heartsnatcher is a multi-layered story, which focuses not on action scenes but on allegory and illusion, therefore requires a precise, suggestive and thoughtful art style for it to work visually. Milović's trembling drawings are filled with translucent watercolours that compliments the feeling of seductive lightness that Vian's story has. His choice of framing and the montage of the panels add to the dream-like atmosphere. In short, Milović's interpretation of Vian's *Heartsnatcher* is a mature and convincing work of art.

Ilija Bakić, writer and comics critic

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Djordje Milović

It was August, Timortis' favourite month. And while the leaves lost their bright shine, to shyly start turning red, in a house on the rocks, at dawn...

A-AAAA!













