

# 20190729\_theslowdown\_20190729\_128

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## SUMMARY KEYWORDS

film, war, bergman, sea, boatman, urgencies, rifts, idyllic, remain, leaflets, poem, dysphonia, night, jewelers, death, fetched, living, city, love, ruins

00:06

I'm Tracy k Smith, and this is the slow

00:09

down.

00:21

I love the films of Swedish director Ingmar Bergman. The first film of his I ever saw was smiles of a summer night, a comedy about love and betrayal that rifts upon the feeling and the enchantment of Shakespeare's A Midsummer Night's Dream, because I was heartsick over a particularly bad boyfriend. When I watched it, the film lifted my spirits, inviting me to laugh at love, and at myself. Years later, I found a copy of Bergman's 1968 film shame, which chronicles a fictional civil war in an unnamed European country. As the film progresses, we see how this cruel wars escalation destroys the one's idyllic lives of a middle class couple. I know a good portion of the film's impact, at least for me, came from the fact that the wars victims and its perpetrators are white people living in the latter 20th century. It is a war that emerges from and consumes the seat of Western power, privilege, and culture. Today's poem is the boatman by Carolyn forshay. It speaks from the humanitarian crisis, ravaging not characters in a film, but actual people in real world Syria. As with Bergman's film for Shea's poem reminds me that sometimes it is art that awakens us most powerfully to the urgencies of the actual world. The boatman, by Carolyn forshay. We were 31 souls, he said, and the gray sick of sea, and a cold rubber boat, rising and falling in our filth. By morning, this didn't matter, no land was in sight. All were soaked to the bone living and dead. We could still float, we said, from war to war, what lay behind us, but ruins of stone piled on ruins of stone city called mother of the poor, surrounded by fields of cotton and millet, City of jewelers and

cloak makers with the oldest church in Christendom, and the sword of Allah. If anyone remains there now, he assures they would be utterly alone. There was a hotel named for it in Rome 200 meters from the Piazza dysphonia or you could have breakfast under the portraits of film stars. There the staff cannot do enough for you. But I'm talking nonsense again. As I have since that night, we fetched a child, not ours from the sea, drifting face down and ally fest. Its eyes taken by fish, or the birds above us. After that, Aleppo went up in smoke, and Raka came under a rain of leaflets warning everyone to go, leave. Yes, but go where we lived through the Americans and Russians, through Americans again, many nights of death from the clouds, morning surprised to be waking from the sleep of death, still unvaried and alive with no safe place. Leave yes will obey the leaflets, but go where? To the sea to be eaten to the shores of Europe to be caged to camp, Misery, and camp remain here. I asked you then, where you tell me you are a poet. If so, our destination is the same. I find myself now the boatman driving a taxi at the end of the world. I will see that you arrive safely, my friend. I will get you there. The slow down is a production of American public media in partnership with the Poetry Foundation.