

## Fists

By Pietro Grossi  
(Pushkin Press)

ALTHOUGH I'd loved to have loved this slim volume by young Italian Pietro Grossi – mainly because I have a weakness for Pushkin Press and its stylish yet personal books – I have to admit that *Fists* did not push the right buttons for me.

All the gushing Italian praise that decorates the jacket might suggest that if read in the original language this might be a wholly different experience.

However, in translation it did not live up to the acclaim.

*Fists* is a book of three stories. The first one, 'Boxing', introduces us to probably the most interesting character of the book: an ungainly geek who, when he discovers a hidden talent for the sport of boxing, becomes an unlikely hero.

Our protagonist dances his way into the imagination of the boxing community, especially as he refuses to actually compete.

Nevertheless the moment comes when the young man discovers someone like himself who comes from a similarly impossible background.

The deaf-mute opponent and the dancer are drawn to each other for the sheer purpose of proving their talents. We are to wonder who will be left standing while destroying all that the other has to live for.

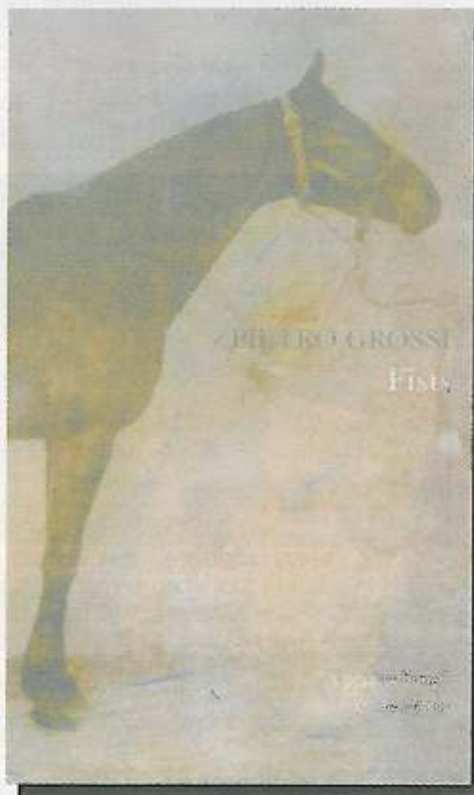
The second tale, 'Horses', brings us two brothers who are each given a gift of a horse from a father that

seems to show little other emotional or paternal attachment. The two brothers employ their gifts for different purposes: one uses his animal to escape from the town where they live, while the other brother strives to learn all he can about his horse and its kin. But which is the better option?

The final instalment, 'The Monkey', tells of a hapless young man with an awful sense of humour (although I think it's not intended as such) who learns that his childhood friend has turned into a monkey – or rather, the friend has begun acting like a monkey to the despair of his family.

The main character is invited back to his home town to visit his friend in an effort to try to bring some sense to him and the situation, but finds that there is precious little that he can, or wants, to do.

Each of these stories suggests that perhaps there should be something more to it, something to be revealed or discovered. However, I found nothing of



the sort. Nothing really developed in any particular direction; it all seemed to run out in the sand, any initial purpose spent. Most characters were superficial and the stories seemed equally so.

Yet, writing this I feel a regret of sorts. I still like Pushkin Press, but this time around I think they added a writer not quite ready to join the rest of their stable.



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