

Tsvetanka Elenkova



Tsvetanka Elenkova was born in Sofia in 1968. She has published three collections of poetry: *The Stakes of the Legion* (1995), *Amphipolis of the Nine Roads* (1999) and *The Seventh Gesture* (2005). The poems here are taken from *The Seventh Gesture*, which is due out in English translation from Shoestring Press (UK) later this year. Her poems have appeared in translation in thirteen countries, from Argentina and Chile to Turkey and Ukraine. She translates from English and Greek. Her translation of the medieval Indian poems *Speaking of Siva* was nominated for the Hristo G. Danov National Award for Translation. She co-founded the first private literary magazine in Bulgaria after the fall of Socialism, *Ah, Maria*. She currently edits the socio-cultural magazine *Europe 2001* in Sofia and the literary magazine *Helios* in Rhodes, Greece.

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Small Stations

Like shadows we must be, stretching under the street lamps or under the slanting rays of the sun, starting from the feet but also from above – we are our own way. We must share the light but not stop, go on. Not the end but the direction is important. And when we sit under a vine, whose dappled shade so resembles the dawn and dusk, birdsong, a dog's bark, it must be a stone along the way, where we sit and rest. Such stories of life and death! The arrival is like those small stations at which the train stops for no more than three minutes.

Your Body, a Garden

Your body excited and limp at the same time, loose soil. A dug garden, which you do not tread on but work with your hands. You clear it of small stones, odd blades of grass, you smooth it with a rake. You make small pits with your fingers or with a special stick for planting. After, a few seeds in each hole (as with animals), then you water it and hope for fine weather. And that your dog won't trample it. Along the wall you plant creepers — a green fence. Which is normally perennial and grows even in your sleep.

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Leonardo's Cross

They find dead victims like this, with legs outstretched and arms to the side. Children sleep like this in their sweetest dreams. Like this, hung on a hook against you, I writhe at your every touch. Of the hardened body, split open up to the throat. Like this, with open mouth, waiting for you to release the catch, to close it — a door banging in the wind. To tie it, as with toothache. To tighten the legs of the lamb after you've stuffed it. The legs of a young bride who wants to conceive. The difference between Leonardo's cross and Christ's.

Translated from Bulgarian by Jonathan Dunne

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