Bosnia and Herzegovina - Desanka Maksimović

**Spring Poem**

*While watching all these early buds and swallows,*

*I can feel tonight*

*that my heart’s slowly growing over sorrows*

*as someone’s horizon on smiley days might;*

*That it’s getting bigger like all plants around*

*and as light as feather,*

*and that all happiness that’s above the ground*

*and a Hell of pain wouldn’t really matter:*

*It’s longing for all things that a life as such*

*could give nice to thy,*

*and completely nothing wouldn’t be too much--*

*it’s eager desire and hopes are so high.*

*Everything that’s happened has been just a play*

*of my heart on fire;*

*my true love has never been given away*

*as much as I could and as I desire;*

*There are, in my deeps, gentle tides of words*

*never let outside;*

*I could give my heart to everyone on worlds,*

*yet, it would remain a lot of it inside.*

*(Translation: Dragana Konstantinovic)*

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***Tavaszi vers***

*Miközben nézem e korai rügyeket és fecskéket,*

*Érzem ma este*

*hogy a szívem lassan túlnő a bánaton.*

*mint valakinek a horizontja a mosolygós napokon;*

*Hogy egyre nagyobb lesz, mint minden növény körülöttem.*

*és könnyű, mint a toll,*

*és hogy minden boldogság, ami a föld felett van.*

*És a fájdalom pokla sem számítana igazán:*

*Vágyik mindenre, amit egy élet, mint ilyen*

*ami szépet adhatna neked,*

*és teljesen semmi sem lenne túl sok...*

*olyan nagy a mohó vágya és reménye.*

*Minden, ami történt, csak lángoló szívem színjáték volt csupán*

*igaz szerelmemet soha nem adtam oda*

*Annyira, amennyire tudtam és amennyire vágytam;*

*Vannak, mélyemben szelíd hullámai a szavaknak*

*soha ki nem engedve;*

*Szívemet mindenkinek odaadhatnám a világokon,*

*Mégis, sok maradna belőle belül.*

**—--------**

**Biography:**

Desanka Maksimović (16 May 1898 – 11 February 1993) was a Serbian poet, writer and translator. Her first works were published in the literary journal *Misao* in 1920, while she was studying at the University of Belgrade. Within a few years, her poems appeared in the *Serbian Literary Herald*, Belgrade's most influential literary publication. In 1925, Maksimović earned a French Government scholarship for a year's study at the University of Paris. Upon her return, she was appointed a professor at Belgrade's elite First High School for Girls, a position she would hold continuously until World War II.

In 1933, Maksimović married Sergej Slastikov, a Russian émigré writer. After being dismissed from her post at the high school by the Germans in 1941, she was reduced to a state of poverty and forced to work odd jobs to survive the three-year occupation. She was only permitted to publish children's literature during this period, but secretly compiled a collection of patriotic poems, which were not published until after the war. Among these was *Krvava bajka* (A Bloody Tale), about the Wehrmacht’s killing of schoolchildren in the Kragujevac massecre. It was recited extensively in post-war commemorative ceremonies and became one of the best known Serbian-language poems.

To mark her 60th birthday, Maksimović was named the recipient of a string of honours and awards in 1958. In 1964, she published one of her most acclaimed works, a volume of reflective poetry entitled *Tražim pomilovanje* (I Seek Clemency). The work's veiled critique of the Tito government made it especially popular. The following year, she became a full-fledged member of the Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts Following her husband's death in 1970, Maksimović's poetry increasingly began to revolve around the subject of human mortality. Maksimović travelled extensively in the 1970s and 1980s, and some of her visits abroad inspired several of her works. She became involved in efforts to combat government censorship in the early 1980s and was active until her death in 1993.

Maksimović was the first female Serbian poet to gain widespread acceptance within Yugoslav literary circles and among the general public. One literary scholar notes that she served as an example for other Serbian women wishing to take up the craft. Maksimović's reputation, which was such that most of her contemporaries referred to her simply by her first name, has led one author to describe her as "the most beloved Serbian poet of the twentieth century".