

Roller-Skating Notes

poems by

Nina Zivancevic

Coolgrove Press

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Nina Zivancevic is the winner of the
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grant for creative writing (poetry domain).



She feels special honored to receive it for her project,
titled The Source of Light in which she describes
poetry as the only source of light in these times when
so many people on our planet live in disgrace and total
darkness. She was inspired by the SYRIAN poet
Nouri al-Jarrah who exclaimed: poetry is the only
source of Light!

Media alchemy by Kiku



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Other books by Nina Zivancevic

Death of New York City (poetry)

More or Less Urgent (poetry)

I Was This War Reporter in Egypt (poetry)

Letters to Myself (poetry)

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11 Femmes Artistes Slaves et Nomades (essays)

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Roller-Skating Notes

ROLLER-SKATING NOTES

It is so much better to get a pair of roller-skates
and set a poem free,

it is so much more interesting to see some friends once a year,
it is so much mucho painful to see some people every day
it is certainly much more subliminal to be left alone
write diaries or read an airconditioned Blaise Cendrars,
it is certainly much more useful to lie down, not
move, touch the earth, kiss the floor, embrace the door and
much more

perhaps just howl or hold someone dear to you,
it is certainly much more practical to fumble through invoices,
legal documents or unfinished galleys of a commercial
publisher,

it is certainly much more satisfying to sit on a Kandahar
balcony,

patting an Afghani hound in a lazy crystalline afternoon dusk,
it is certainly much more romantic to be Dracula's lover or
Voltaire's fellow-talker in a European gloomy castle,
or drink beer at CBGB's with your ball chain and leather
psychedelic pals,

evidently, it takes much more effort to sign petitions

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to set prisoners free, write phony mail
to iron-curtain cordial officials or answer useless or urgent
calls when your heart is on fire,
and it's even more prestigious to keep up with the
Tennessee
Song Lyrics contests or with scoops of the news from
various
organizational gatherings claiming that you can still
print whatever you think
about the guy who stopped me on a street this morning
yelling out prophetic words at me and the one
I remembered was meant to hit me hard
below every inch of the belt
IF YOU wanna skate, he said,
YOU HAVE TO HAVE AN ATTITUDE
and this glorious city, smaller than life,
will not let your poem
fly away with that one



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INSTEAD OF A PHOTO OR A DRAWING,
ON CHRISTMAS EVENING
(for Yasha, Olivera eventually)

Don't get me wrong-
The "wrong" sometimes gets hold of us,
Rears its ugly head
And then disaster, stupidity...

The light of reason is flooding my room now,
Then the ante-chamber and the entire church
Of my goodwill where the secret altar burns,
The innermost chapel of my heart,
You are in it too, shiny with that light
Brighter than the flames,
Dangerous to reach and lost to my touch

You dwelled in it for quite a while,
Not paying the rent, ignoring the angels
Their tired messages, the price was too high
The ossified bone shell, expensive ivory-tower
In which our hearts used to speak, in rumours

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Or in whispers, crying out loud, cackling,
Those hearts burned to ashes and then the smoke
Raising above the candles, floating in the air,
Yes, constantly floating, but what else
Could they do?



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ELYSIAN FIELDS OF POWER

(For Stephanette, Ivana eventually)

So, Tiny Tom and Speedy Gonzales
Have had a Lab,
It was pretty much a physical thing,
They tried to outdo the topology of a body in space
From person A to person B ran the 'power-field of
a person', so how would we envelope them
into our power-circle, if we were to say
'I'm taking over a situation'?
then
You would say 'I don't want to take a person
In my power-field, I want them to be free,
And besides, I'm not Pina Bausch or Vito Acconci',

Documentation is more a referent than a remainder
And performance means
There's an audience,
An event is an accident sometimes
And sometimes it's steady and sleepy, like a video;
There may be people or not

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A couple of technical by-products
But what always really counts is people
Who make decision whether
to be there or not to be
as we're making a private
out of their public space
and
not everyone can get it...
we are just trying to become these buildings
themselves, a part of the architectural landscape,
surroundings which is
the Other



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SAMSARA
(from Dechen Padmo)

Samsara is killing us-
Too much talk about money and its
neoliberal
Issues, too much talk and
Worry, too much fear,
The essential slips away
The existential crawls in
We will survive
And then- what else- die
Under the kind
and watchful
Eye of our good
Lord Tcherenzi



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WAR DRUMS or
LE CONTRE-ATAQUE D'EMPIRE
(for my son)

DOOM DOOM DOOM ACHOOUM !

DUMB DUMB DUMB DUMB !

The drums of war are having fun ...

It is so dumb to suffer this doom

For so many times throughout history

Tucidides hated it, the Romans grasped for it

It's only they had more style in faking the greatness

Of their dumb empire when they conquered Carthage

Recently known as Lebanon with its blisters and horror
and worries...

DOOM DOOM DOOM ACHOOUM !

DUMB DUMB DUMB DUMB !

There is a fear there in hurting others

Fear of starvation and an infantile kick-

"I'm gonna conquer everyone, I'm gonna be better"

And false modesty is just a mode to say that you are really
better

And more powerful than the enemy

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But the perverse thing—when one comes to think of this
century

Is selling the arms to the Carthaginians then persuading
them to attack the others

Just out of fear and spite and false feeling of might
An old trick a dope dealer would teach you in the street,
age ten

Can never sell things and buy wisdom at the same time,
At the same time the drums of war (or is it just a bad
economy deal and panic?)

The drums beat DUMB DUMB DUMB DUMB
SCUM SCUM SCUM SCUM
DOOM DOOM DOOM DOOM

Bloody soldiers and corpses enter everyone's room
I was so crushed when NATO bombed my home town
I could barely got my own mother out of that place
And I believed ! Fool that I was, that
I would never speak a word of English again
My shrink had told me: distance yourself from
Yourself and don't be so DUMB DUMB DUMB
DUMB

Like the rest of this scum !
Doomed to walk in this ancient town and see that
Those who clone new human beings will soon destroy
them

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And those who pay taxes will buy the axes and will
Destroy the road to Carthage—Flaubert wrote Sallambo
And the Ridiculous Theatre staged it, than the actor died
And a president had a try, the Greeks tried to teach the
Romans how

To think—whatever they learnt from the Persians,
The Persians settled along the West Coast in the U.S. and
started paying

Their taxes, oh how they were
DUMB DUMB DUMB DUMB shook by their Doom
looking for a crumb !

Byzantium crushed to ashes, the Ottoman heroes
fearing the Kurds !

DUMB DUMB DUMB DUMB—forget about the
DOOM DOOM DOOM DOO—the formula is easy :
Go and learn your history lesson—a happy transit will
Calm your passion, dry your tears and drown your fears,
A reminder for the small ones : on the top of the theater
board

An ancient alphabet spells the letters : THE EMPIRE
STRIKES BACK !

(the director is Greek – has something to teach us: go home
and

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turn your TV on : instead of the stars up there over that
ancient Iraqi land

you might spot the bombs made of depleted
(impoverished Uranium)

and nobody knows how they got there nor what to do
with them after all

DOOM DOOM DOOM DOOM

DUMB DUMB DUMB DUMB the drums of war

Are having fun.



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DROP OF SPANISH BLOOD

(a migrant's story)

I see your rage
You poor migrant's son
Your resplendent beauty as you
Defend my honor
In front of that large bureaucratic stupidity
I knew you would have to revenge on those
Who have been humiliating me since the day one:
You were about to leave my stomach and I couldn't ask
For water
The nurses ignored me, I was hysteric
On the verge of tears
I was changing your diapers on a bus to Hungary
When they wanted to throw us out
From the bus
And then much later
The police officers were asking me if I spoke
To you in French, for the sake of better integration;
No one has ever seen my tears but you
At night when I was reading and rereading the French
dictionary
I thought I was going insane

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And today flashing all these beautiful
Polite and polished idioms in your father-tongue
You have fought for my rights, resilient poet
that you are, disheveled , brilliant and modest
you've noticed : less is always more,
it survives in winter
in my private language of oblivion
it's just a language, and the meaning remains hidden
to those who have never moved
out of their walled up chambers
and their
tucked up destiny



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PARIS IS BURNING

Paris is burning
The buildings are in flames
kids, cars, faces- shame on color
Shame on white shame on black shame
Everyone is burning with shame

Let me tell you mother, why
Paris is burning, says he,
Let me tell you mother why Paris
Is burning- the police have set children
On fire, the police have set children on fire as
These were tired of social injustice
As they were sick with social injustice

Let me tell you mother why Paris is burning- the police
Have set black kids on fire and they turned red, they
turned gray
They turned to burnt flesh
Just because they are black
Let me tell you why Paris is burning,
Nothing bad will happen to me, mother

As I am white, and yet
I understand why Paris is burning,
Kids, buildings, cars and faces
Burning with shame...

(written circa 2005)



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Photo by: Kirila Radovanovic-Faeh

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Poet, essayist, fiction writer, playwright, art critic, translator and contributing editor to NY ARTS magazine from Paris, Serbian-born Nina Zivancevic published 15 books of poetry. She has also written three books of short stories, two novels and a book of essay on Milosh Crnjanski (her doctoral thesis) published in Paris, New York and Belgrade. The recipient of three literary awards, a former assistant and secretary to Allen Ginsberg, she has also edited and participated in numerous anthologies of contemporary world poetry.

As editor and correspondent she has contributed to *New York Arts Magazine*, *Modern Painters*, *American Book Review*, *East Village Eye*, *Republique de lettres*. She has

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lectured at Naropa University, New York University, the Harriman Institute and St. John's University in the U.S., and she has taught English language and literature at La Sorbonne (Paris I and V) and the History of Avant-garde Theatre at Paris 8 University in France and at numerous universities and colleges in Europe.

She has actively worked for theatre and radio: 4 of her plays were performed and emitted in the U.S. and Great Britain.

In New York she had worked with the "Living Theatre" and the members of the "Wooster Group".

She lives and works in Paris.

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