

»CHILDE ROLAND TO THE DARK
TOWER CAME«

(see Edgar's song in »Lear«)

My first thought was, he lied in every word,
That hoary cripple, with malicious eye
Askance to watch the working of his lie
On mine, and mouth scarce able to afford
Suppression of the glee that pursed and scored
Its edge, at one more victim gained thereby.

What else should he be set for, with his staff?
What, save to waylay with his lies, ensnare
All travellers who might find him posted there,
And ask the road? I guessed what skull-like laugh
Would break, what crutch 'gin write my epitaph
For pastime in the dusty thoroughfare,

If at his counsel I should turn aside
Into that ominous tract which, all agree,
Hides the Dark Tower. Yet acquiescingly
I did turn as he pointed: neither pride
Nor hope rekindling at the end desried,
So much as gladness that some end might be.

For, what with my whole world-wide wandering,
What with my search drawn out thro' years, my hope
Dwindled into a ghost not fit to cope
With that obstreperous joy success would bring,
I hardly tried now to rebuke the spring
My heart made, finding failure in its scope.

»DJETIĆ ROLAND K MRAČNOJ KULI STIŽE«

(vidjeti Edgarovu pjesmu u »Learu«)

Pomislih prvo da u svakoj laže riječi,
Taj sijedi bogalj kada zlobnim okom stade
Iskosa gledat kakav učinak imade
Laž mu na moje, jedva ustima kad spriječi
Veselje što im pūći rubove i beći
Zbog nove žrtve što joj pokorena pade.

S čega bi drugog bio tu, sa svojim štapom?
Već zasjeo da uvreba u zamku laži
Sve putnike što možda nađu ga na straži
I traže put? Naslutih lubanju u jakom
Smijehu, i epitaf što piše mi ga štakom,
Da prašno prohođenje rasonodom blaži,

Htjednem li skrenuti na njegov savjet sada,
U onaj koban predjel na zlu glasu ući
Što skriva Mračnu kulu. Ipak pristajući
Skrenuh kud rukom pokaza: ni ponos tada
Ne otkri, ni na koncu razabrana nada,
Bar radost što me čeka neki kraj mogući.

Što s mojim lutanjima diljem cijelog svijeta,
Što s godinama traženja, što s mojom nadom
U sablast izrođenom, posve neprikladnom
Za bučnu radost koja s uspjehom se sreća —
Sad jedva pokušah ukorit zbog uzleta
Srce, kad njegov cilj se našao pred padom.

As when a sick man very near to death
 Seems dead indeed, and feels begin and end
 The tears and takes the farewell of each friend,
And hears one bid the other go, draw breath
Freelier outside («since all is o'er,« he saith,
 »And the blow fallen no grieving can amend;«)

While some discuss if near the other graves
 Be room enough for this, and when a day
 Suits best for carrying the corpse away,
With care about the banners, scarves and staves:
And still the man hears all, and only craves
 He may not shame such tender love and stay.

Thus, I had so long suffered in this quest,
 Heard failure prophesied so oft, been wit
 So many times among »The Band« — to wit,
The knights who to the Dark Tower's search addressed
Their steps — that just to fail as they, seemed best,
 And all the doubt was now — should I be fit?

So, quiet as despair, I turned from him,
 That hateful cripple, out of his highway
 Into the path he pointed. All the day
Had been a dreary one at best, and dim
Was settling to its close, yet shot one grim
 Red leer to see the plain catch its estray.

For mark! no sooner was I fairly found
 Pledged to the plain, after a pace or two,
 Than, pausing to throw backward a last view

Ko kad bolesnik vrlo blizu smrti dođe,
I kanda mrtav, čuti da mu suza kane
I sahne, pa se s cijelim rodом praštati stane,
Čujuć gdje jedan drugom govori da pođe
Udahnut svježi zrak (»Jer ovo«, veli, »prođe,
»Nikakva žalost ne će popraviti rane«);

Dok neki raspravljaju hoće li za raku
Kraj drugih mjesta bit, i koji dan zacijelo
Najbolje dolikuje da se nosi tijelo,
Uz skrb o ljestvama i plahti i barjaku,
Taj čovjek samo žudi, čujuć riječ im svaku,
Da stojeć ne sramoti takvo sjetno djelo.

Toliko dugo u toj propatih potrazi,
Slušati proroštva o neuspjehu vičan,
I mnogo puta čuti da sam »družbi« sličan —
Ko vitez koji tražeć Mračnu kulu gazi,
Da poput njih mi valja propasti na stazi,
I dvojba sva sad bješe: jesam li doličan?

Tih kao očaj, ono čeljade odurno
Napustih tako, skrenuv van njegova puta,
Kazanom stazom. Čitav dan je bio mutan
U najboljem slučaju, i skončao tmurno
Na završetku; ali ipak baci žurno
Prijek pogled na živinče što ravnicom lúta.

Jer jedva stupih na ravnicu što me steže,
Kročivši korak-dva po onim zaravancim',
Kad, zastavši da natrag zadnji pogled bacim

O'er the safe road, 'twas gone; grey plain all round:
Nothing but plain to the horizon's bound.

I might go on; nought else remained to do.

So, on I went. I think I never saw

Such starved ignoble nature; nothing throve:

For flowers — as well expect a cedar grove!

But cockle, spurge, according to their law

Might propagate their kind, with none to awe,

You'd think; a burr had been a treasure trove.

No! penury, inertness and grimace,

In some strange sort, were the land's portion. »See

Or shut your eyes,« said Nature peevishly,

»It nothing skills: I cannot help my case:

'Tis the Last Judgment's fire must cure this place,

Calcine its clods and set my prisoners free.«

If there pushed any ragged thistle-stalk

Above its mates, the head was chopped; the bents

Were jealous else. What made those holes and rents

In the dock's harsh swarth leaves, bruised as to baulk

All hope of greenness? 'tis a brute must walk

Pashing their life out, with a brute's intents.

As for the grass, it grew as scant as hair

In leprosy; thin dry blades pricked the mud

Which underneath looked kneaded up with blood.

One stiff blind horse, his every bone a-stare,

Stood stupefied, however he came there:

Thrust out past service from the devil's stud!

Na stalan put, a njega nema; svuda seže
Siva ravnica da se s obzorjem poveže.
Ne ostade mi drugo nego da koracim.

Te pođoh dalje. Mislim da ne vidjeh nikad
Narav kržljiviju, gdje ništa ne uspije.
Što, cvijeće? Cedrovu se gaju nadaj prije!
Al po svom zakonu su kukolj i mlječika
Tu mogli množiti svoj soj, bez protivnika,
Misliš; a čkalj se poput bajnog blaga krije.

Ne! Ovu zemlju vrsta zapala je čudna
Siromaštva i lijenosti i sklibnje. »Gledaj
Il sklopi oči«, reče Priroda od jeda,
»Ne mogu sebi pomoći; tu nema čuda;
To mjesto mora liječiti oganj Strašnog suda,
Sužnje mi oslobodit mrveć grude s reda.«

Ako bi izrasla rutava stapka mliječi
Vrh drugih, glava bi se sjekla; vlati tupe
Inače bjehu jalne. Što li stvori rupe
U tvrdom lišću kiselice, da se spriječi
Sva nada u zeleno? Jamačno ih zgnječi
Zvijer, život zatiruć u zvjerske svrhe glupe.

A trava rasla oskudno ko rijetka dlaka
U gubi; tanke suhe vlati bõle blato
Što kanda bješe s krvlju miješeno. I nato
Ukrućen slijepi konj, a kost mu strši svaka,
Skamenjen stao, tamo došavši iz mraka:
Odslužio pa prognalo ga vražje jato!

Alive? he might be dead for aught I know,
 With that red gaunt and colloped neck a-strain,
 And shut eyes underneath the rusty mane;
Seldom went such grotesqueness with such woe;
I never saw a brute I hated so;
 He must be wicked to deserve such pain.

I shut my eyes and turned them on my heart.
 As a man calls for wine before he fights,
 I asked one draught of earlier, happier sights,
Ere fitly I could hope to play my part.
Think first, fight afterwards — the soldier's art:
 One taste of the old time sets all to rights.

Not it! I fancied Cuthbert's reddening face
 Beneath its garniture of curly gold,
 Dear fellow, till I almost felt him fold
An arm in mine to fix me to the place
That way he used. Alas, one night's disgrace!
 Out went my heart's new fire and left it cold.

Giles then, the soul of honour — there he stands
 Frank as ten years ago when knighted first.
 What honest men should dare (he said) he durst.
Good — but the scene shifts — faugh! what hangman hands
Pin to his breast a parchment? His own bands
 Read it. Poor traitor, spit upon and curst!

Better this present than a past like that;
 Back therefore to my darkening path again!
 No sound, no sight as far as eye could strain.

Živ? Mogaše bit mrtav ja koliko znadoh:
 Crven mu napet vrat, i gvaljast, kada pride,
 I oči zaklopljene ispod grive riđe;
Rijetko je grotesknost sa takvim išla jadom;
Ne vidjeh nikad tako mrsku zvijer, ni kradom;
 Opak je ako muka na nj tolika siđe.

Ja sklopih oči, na srce ih svoje svratih.
 Ko čovjek koji prije borbe ište vina,
 Zatražih gutljaj ranih, sretnijih širina,
Da mogu ulogu valjano odigrati.
Vojnički zanat: prvo misli, potom mlati;
 Jer sve dovede u red okus iz davnina.

Ne to! Zamišljah rumen lica Cuthberthova
 Pod onim ukrasom od kovrčava zlata,
 Drag družo, dok ga ne oćutjeh gdje me hvata
Za ruku rukom te me na mjestu prikova
Na način kako znaše. Sramna noć je ova!
 U srcu sad je mraz, kad minu nova vatra.

Tu zatim stoji duša časti, Egidije,
 Iskren ko prije deset ljeta, kad se redi.
 Što treba to i mora, reče on, tko vrijedi.
Dobro — no prizor klizi — fuj! Krvnik mu šije
Na grudi pergament? Nek družba mu ga štije.
 Proklet i popljuvan je, izdajica bijedni!

I sadašnjost je bolja nego prošlost ova;
 Stog opet natrag k mojoj stazi pomračenja!
 Ni zvuka, ni vidika od napeta zrenja.

Will the night send a howlet or a bat?
I asked: when something on the dismal flat
Came to arrest my thoughts and change their train.

A sudden little river crossed my path
As unexpected as a serpent comes.
No sluggish tide congenial to the glooms;
This, as it frothed by, might have been a bath
For the fiend's glowing hoof — to see the wrath
Of its black eddy bespate with flakes and spumes.

So petty yet so spiteful! All along
Low scrubby alders kneeled down over it;
Drenched willows flung them headlong in a fit
Of mute despair, a suicidal throng:
The river which had done them all the wrong,
Whate'er that was, rolled by, deterred no whit.

Which, while I forded, — good saints, how I feared
To set my foot upon a dead man's cheek,
Each step, or feel the spear I thrust to seek
For hollows, tangled in his hair or beard! —
It may have been a water-rat I speared,
But, ugh! it sounded like a baby's shriek.

Glad was I when I reached the other bank.
Now for a better country. Vain presage!
Who were the strugglers, what war did they wage,
Whose savage trample thus could pad the dank
Soil to a splash? Toads in a poisoned tank,
Or wild cats in a red-hot iron cage —

Upitah: Gdje je noćas šišmiš ili sova?
Kadli sa strašne ravni stiže smetnja nova
Da misli moje zapriječi i tok im mijenja.

Nenadna rječica presiječe stazu meni
Nepredviđeno kako otrovnica bane.
Nimalo lijena plima poput tmine znane;
Ova je mogla biti kupelj, dok se pjeni,
Za vražje kopito — da crni vrtlog gnjevni
Vidi kad pahuljom i pjenom prskat stane.

Neznatna, ali tako pakosna! Duž tijeka
Kržljave niske johe preko nje su klekle;
Strmòglāvē ih vrbe, očajne, nabrekle —
Gomila samoubilačka, nijema, prijeka;
Sve krivde moguće nanosila im rijeka,
A vode joj nezastrašene dalje tekle.

Kako se, dobri sveci, bojah dok ih gazih
Da nogu spustit ću na mrtav obraz nečiji,
I kopljem ćutjet, kročeć, mjesto rupa riječnih,
Da mu se zaplelo u bradu ili vlasi!
Vodenog štakora ja možda proburazih,
Uh, ali zvučalo je kao vrisak dječji.

Drago mi bješe kad na drugi žal koracih.
U bolju zemlju sada. Slutnjo prevarena!
Tko bjehu borci, kojeg rata povedena,
Tko utr tlo u baru, koji ga divljaci
Gaziše? Krastače u otrovanoj mlaci,
Il divlje mačke iz kaveza užarena —

The fight must so have seemed in that fell cirque.
What penned them there, with all the plain to choose?
No foot-print leading to that horrid mews,
None out of it. Mad brewage set to work
Their brains, no doubt, like galley-slaves the Turk
Pits for his pastime, Christians against Jews.

And more than that — a furlong on — why, there!
What bad use was that engine for, that wheel,
Or brake, not wheel — that harrow fit to reel
Men's bodies out like silk? with all the air
Of Tophet's tool, on earth left unaware,
Or brought to sharpen its rusty teeth of steel.

Then came a bit of stubbed ground, once a wood,
Next a marsh, it would seem, and now mere earth
Desperate and done with; (so a fool finds mirth,
Makes a thing and then mars it, till his mood
Changes and off he goes!) within a rood —
Bog, clay and rubble, sand and stark black dearth.

Now blotches rankling, coloured gay and grim,
Now patches where some leanness of the soil's
Broke into moss or substances like boils;
Then came some palsied oak, a cleft in him
Like a distorted mouth that splits its rim
Gaping at death, and dies while it recoils.

And just as far as ever from the end!
Nought in the distance but the evening, nought
To point my footstep further! At the thought,

U groznoj toj areni takva bješe bitka.
Tko li ih utori, kraj površine ravne?
Nijednog traga pak do krletke ogavne,
Nit iz nje. Mozgovi od luda im napitka
Na poslu, kako Turčin hucka rad užitka
S galija roblje, protiv Židova kršćane.

I ondje još — osminu milje dalje — dosta!
Što bješe zloraba tog stroja, tog kotača,
Il nije kotač, brana? Prikladna drljača
Da suče ljudska tijela kao svilu? Prosta
Ko sprave Tofeta, ne hoteć zemlji osta,
Il da joj hrđav čelik zubaca se glača.

Pa dođe malko iskrčena tla, negdašnji lug,
Močvara zatim, regbi, puka zemlja sada,
Zdvojna, na ugaru; (lud se veseli kada
Napravi nešto, pa to kvari, mijenja ćud
I posve šene on); dva hvata dalje — svud
Glib, krš i glina, pijesak, šaka crna jada.

Čas gnojni prišti, živahne i tmurne boje,
Čas krpe zemlje jalove gdje naglo niče
màšina ili tvari što na čire sličje;
Pa neki uzet hrast, sa raspuklinom što je
Ko kriva usta koja rubove raskroje
Buljeć u smrt, i mriju dok ona uzmiče.

A dalje nego ikad od svršetka duga!
I samo večer u daljini, ništa više
Da upravi mi korak! Dok me misli tište,

A great black bird, Apollyon's bosom-friend,
Sailed past, nor beat his wide wing dragon-penned
That brushed my cap — perchance the guide I sought.

For, looking up, aware I somehow grew,
'Spite of the dusk, the plain had given place
All round to mountains — with such name to grace
Mere ugly heights and heaps now stolen in view.
How thus they had surprised me, — solve it, you!
How to get from them was no clearer case.

Yet half I seemed to recognise some trick
Of mischief happened to me, God knows when —
In a bad dream perhaps. Here ended, then,
Progress this way. When, in the very nick
Of giving up, one time more, came a click
As when a trap shuts — you're inside the den!

Burningly it came on me all at once,
This was the place! those two hills on the right,
Crouched like two bulls locked horn in horn in fight;
While to the left, a tall scalped mountain... Dunce,
Dotard, a-dozing at the very nonce,
After a life spent training for the sight!

What in the midst lay but the Tower itself?
The round squat turret, blind as the fool's heart
Built of brown stone, without a counterpart
In the whole world. The tempest's mocking elf
Points to the shipman thus the unseen shelf
He strikes on, only when the timbers start.

Velika crna ptica, Abadonu druga,
Bez lepeta proleti, kapu mi zastruga
Zmajevim krilom — možda vodič što se ište.

Jer, zirnuv uvis, svjestan postadoh nekako,
Usprkos mraku, da ravnice one nesta,
Svud okolo planine — tako nazvah smjesta
Viđena ružna brda. Vi riješite — kako
Te hrpe mene iznenadiše onako!
Još teže činilo se izvući s tog mjesta.

Tek napola me kanda neka varka štipnu
Nevoljē što me snašla, sam Bog znade kada —
U ružnu možda snu. No, završava valjda
Tijek toga puta. Kadli, doista u hipu
Predaje, još jedanput, začuh neku škripu:
To škljocnu stupica — u jazbini ste sada!

Ko žarki oganj naglo sinu mi posvema:
To je to mjesto! Oni brijezi zdesna sjeli,
Ko bikovi u borbi kad bi roge spleli;
Dok slijeva golē glavē planina golema...
Truntavac, glupan, baš u prigodi zadrijema,
A za taj prizor vježbao se život cijeli!

Što drugo nego Kula u sredini tu je?
Okrugli tornjić, slijep ko srce u luđaka.
Od smeđa kamena, na svijetu bez parnjaka.
Đavolak olujni se tako podruguje
Brodaru što na skrit se greben nasukuje —
Tek mu ga pokaže kad puknu rebra jaka.

Not see? because of night perhaps? — why, day
Came back again for that! before it left,
The dying sunset kindled through a cleft:
The hills, like giants at a hunting, lay
Chin upon hand, to see the game at bay, —
»Now stab and end the creature — to the heft!«

Not hear? when noise was everywhere! it tolled
Increasing like a bell. Names in my ears
Of all the lost adventurers my peers, —
How such a one was strong, and such was bold,
And such was fortunate, yet each of old
Lost, lost! one moment knelled the woe of years.

There they stood, ranged along the hillsides, met
To view the last of me, a living frame
For one more picture! in a sheet of flame
I saw them and I knew them all. And yet
Dauntless the slug-horn to my lips I set,
And blew »Childe Roland to the Dark Tower came.«

(1855)

Ne vidje? Zar zbog noći? Pa, dan se u mijeni
Vratio radi toga! Prije nego minu
Sunce na umoru osvijetli raspuklinu;
A brijezi, divovi u lovu, podnimljeni
Leže da vide divljač stjeranu, u sjeni —
»Sad zboli i dokrajči stvorenje što zginu!«

Ne ču? Kad buka bješe svuda! Poput zvona
Sve jače brecaše. Imena pustolova
U mojim ušima, sve nestalih drugóva —
Kako je ovaj snažan bio, hrabar onaj,
Taj sreće imaše, a svaki od iskona
Izgubljen! Jedan časak breca jad vjekóva.

Ondje su stajali duž obronaka redno,
Skupljeni da moj kraj promatraju, što bliže —
Živ okvir za još jednu sliku. Plamen liže
Po njima, vidjeh sve i poznah. No svejedno
Bez straha ja sam krivi rog na usne djeno,
I puhnuh. »Djetić Roland k Mračnoj kuli stiže.«

(1855)