

TANJA KRAGUJEVIĆ



### **Out of Light, ot of Dust**

#### **PEBBLE, DUST**

What would I give you my star.  
You that can lead my way even  
without my share or knowledge.

What else. But inevitable.  
What I am. Body and voice.

For I am the way.  
And dust on the road.  
Your accomplishment rather.  
Your self to a degree.

You bounded me. With freedom  
to search for you. With rope-game  
that children play. With years.  
With long shadows on a short road.

Hence when you decide  
to seduce-take someone  
again I will be there too.  
Full of your shine and bread.

Mundane minor torment.  
A pebble in a shoe.  
Gravel on the walk.

While you will be glowing.  
Intently. With celebration  
colors. With rhinestones  
on your left and right shoulder.  
With champagne foam  
of residue of Space  
on the tip of each beam.

And a misprint  
of my delusional letter

in your infinite text.

I will be Singidunumian.  
Already quite archaic.  
Mote of your eye. Yours.  
In you. A speck of me.

Although, if we look from  
this ground-level and noise  
from these quenched celebrations  
of air and fire  
from these rolling  
desert rose signals,  
I am just what I am.

My own voice.  
The star of my dust.

Safe future  
of your inconceivable path.

## **INNOCENCE**

*I'll tell God on you all.\**  
Stammered a three-year old  
mowed down in crossfire  
between *these* and *those ones*.

Choked to death  
on internal bleeding.  
In the home town  
that kept failing  
to be one town.

Hit by wound of knowledge.  
Covered in leaving. There.  
Where God is. Eustachian tube.  
Big ear. Of clouds and silk.

There. Where, accordingly,  
Creator will wipe every drop  
of blood and crying. And death  
will be no more. Nor moans. Nor grief.

From every tear he wiped away  
he will make an ocean. Immense  
water of life. From where  
choirs of young boys  
ensue.

They side-step the dirty-faced  
and hungry boys

emerging  
from the glow of explosions  
and darkness. Gunpowder and fire.

In front of shacks and skyscrapers.  
On shores. Below statues  
of victory. On hills of the east.  
They lay their pearly wings.

For where would the land be.  
How would the heaven do.  
Without those sleepy comets  
from the cemetery for starlight bodies  
rendering the solar wind  
to the face of the day.

Without the irrefutable eternity.  
The instantaneously reached  
first and last translucency.  
Behind a video-beam  
showing live  
the act of horror.

Without the small sanctuary lamps.  
Without the lake eyes. Without the  
unharmed indisputable  
assumption of innocence.

\*Inspired by true event in Syria, in January 2014.

## **AFTER THE SHOW OF GOLDEN WREATHS**

The scent of Thessalonica in Belgrade.  
Fifth century. Olive  
and myrtle. Ivy and oak.  
Aphrodite's aphrodisiac spell.  
Eternal passing of she who  
presides over love and death.

Who sprinkled the speckled pigeon  
toddling in front of us in his  
promenade resembling a child  
resolving Heracles'  
knots. The streets.

With stalls packed with jugs.  
Sunglasses.  
Umbrellas. Bracelets  
and scarves made by hand  
of a new age. With evanescent  
alliance of plastic  
and clay. Acrylic and silk.

Coos that walking  
domesticated rose  
quartz tiny nugget. That feathered  
book of urban wildlife.

Multiplying its profile.  
Amidst puddles of dark.  
And buzz and dust.

One can tell. It is coming from stars.

And through its tiny pace  
he responsibly transforms this alley  
of stocks exchanges and digital pharmacies.  
This cozy staring at windows  
and taking pictures of irises and tulips.  
Into the catwalk glitter.  
A new model of the bridal era.

Full of pigeon power.  
That needs nothing more  
but a whit of dark. To flare up.  
Amidst Dis'\* blue lockup.

And the famous crumb. From  
the eternal hotel window.  
From the bread of solitude.

The one that Tesla\*\*, while nursing  
broken little legs of birds  
by placing them in  
the holes of cardboard  
shoeboxes. Every morning.  
Over and over. Teaches flying.  
While thinking incessantly  
The being. And the light.

So we can see.  
When sewing a button.

Even when we can't. We still see.  
A tiny lamp. A bead.  
Apocrypha of the soul.

Belgrade, March, 2014.

*\*Dis – Vladislav Petković (1880-1917), a poet of grief, of mystery of human existence, of predestined human hopelessness, and of the metaphysical, astral outcome. He was a war reporter in The Balkan War (1912), marched through Albania during the retreat of Serbian army (1915) and drowned on his way back from exile in France (1915-1917) after a German submarine torpedoed his ship.*

*\*\*Tesla – Nikola Tesla (1856-1943), world-renown scientist and inventor of Serbian descend. Constructor of high frequency and high potential currency generator ("Tesla*

transformer”), coreless transformer or Tesla coil. 2014 was the 71st anniversary of his death and 130th year since he immigrated to America. For the last ten years of his life he lived in suite 3327 on the 33rd floor of New Yorker Hotel, where he fed pigeons from his window every morning.

## **CHARPIE**

*Sixth day of Flood.  
Serbia, May 2014.*

Swans. Asleep.

Slid safely from satellite  
images. Their beaks  
tucked backwards.  
In the wings and feathers. In leaves.

Happy yesterday.  
In the rising flood.

Oh, green homeland of mine.

Charpie. Inhabited  
with destinies.

Linen. Soaked  
in the body of wound.

*Charpie* (Fr.) – clean linen cloth scraped to threads, once used for dressing wounds.

## **LIGHT GATHERER**

Sorry for cornering you  
like this. On the street.  
I've seen you around.  
If that's an excuse.

So I go out.  
To gather a bit of  
light.

And I wanted to tell you:  
I've read your note  
about the Little Prince and Rose.  
I've cut it out. And saved it.

I usually don't go anywhere.  
I don't have anyone.

Nice things that happen to me  
I find sometimes  
in the newspapers.

I stack the cuttings  
in the shoeboxes.

Leave them be.  
For my brother's children.

So they might have  
something. Handed down.  
By me.

**Translated from Serbian into English by Marija Knežević**

**TANJA KRAGUJEVIĆ** (1946), Serbian poet and essayist, has published her twentieth book of poetry entitled *Out of Light, Out of Dust* in 2014. The critics and essayists have noted the following:

#### **AEOLUS' HARP OF TANJA KRAGUJEVIĆ**

I wrote about Tanja Kragujević's poetry a decade ago in my book *Poem, Form, Meaning* on the most important, in my opinion, poets of the 20<sup>th</sup> century – in the section entitled *The Four Poetesses by the End of the Century*.

Today, I can still hear clearly, as I did so many years back, the words heavy with meaning, those Mandelstam's "pregnant words." I feel the warm wisdom of poetess' female code, her confabulation with the present and the eternity, and I note her gift – due to her extraordinary sensibility – to capture the moments she lives in with an x-ray precision, to explore those miniature master-pieces of sharp and precise contemplation, and to identify those exceptional conjunctions of the logical and the visual, while her "words-pilots" resonate within me. I pursue her complex poetical thinking, her fusion of the speculative and the exact, the power of her expression, focused, above all, on our earthly existence, and on the life, here and now. I respect her competence in soliloquy and dialogue, and her diverse articulation of the tone, along with her many other qualities.

I would like to reiterate the conclusion that I made many years ago – significance of her poetry is comparable to the accomplishments of the best of Serbian-language poets.

In the context of employing the "pregnant words" within our literary tradition, one would think of the poetry of Vasko Popa, of semantic / euphonic meaning in the work of Momčilo Nastasijević, and a specific euphonic quality in poetry of Laza Kostić, Koder, Davičo and now, in Tanja Kragujević's work.

**Milica Nikolić**, literary translator and essayist

#### **RIPENING IS ALL**

Tanja Kragujević created one of the most accomplished and recognizable lyric idioms in contemporary Serbian poetry during the five decades of her presence in our literature. This is why I believe that her verse *Now ripening is all* depicts, quite precisely, her awareness of this long-lasting, intriguing, and productive course. Indeed, her book entitled *Out of Light, Out of Dust* celebrates coming to maturity on every page, as a rare and a precious fruit. Whether she writes a fairly long lyric poem, weaving her golden associative threads into a yarn, or quite a short, effective

poem incepted as a commentary on the immediate historical or social reality, Tanja Kragujević manifests maturity of ideas, technique, meaning and sense in a manner that only a very few of our contemporary poets can.

Poetry of Tanja Kragujević is as poetry of acceptance and doubt as much as it is poetry of resistance and faith at this moment in time. The poetess continues to place all of her human stakes on a scale of words, verses and poems, with an artistic maturity that credits contemporary Serbian poetry.

*Vasa Pavković, critic and essayist, in the afterword to the book*

## **KAMIČAK, PRAŠINA**

Šta bih ti mogla dati zvezdo.  
Ti što i bez moga udela  
i znanja vodiš moj put.

Šta drugo. Do neizbežno.  
Što jesam. Telo i glas.

Jer ja sam put.  
I prašina na putu.  
U neku ruku tvoje delo.  
U izvesnoj meri ti.

Vežala si me. Slobodom  
da tražim te. U igri dečijim  
konopima. Godinama.  
Dugim senkama kratkog puta.  
Kada opet nekog  
zavedeš-povedeš  
biću stoga i ja tu.  
Puna tvog sjaja i hleba.

Svakidašnja mukica.  
Kamičak u cipeli.  
Tucanik na putu.

Dok ti budeš svetlela.  
Netremice. Bojama  
praznika. Sa štrasom  
na levom i desnom ramenu.  
Sa šampanjskom penom  
svemirskog ostatka  
na vršku svakog zraka.

I štamparskom greškom  
mog zaludnog slova  
u tvom beskonačnom tekstu.

Biću singidunumska.  
Već posve arhaična.  
Trunka tvog oka. Tvoja.  
U tebi. Pomalo ja.

lako gledano iz ovog  
prizemlja i buke  
iz ovih pogašenih svetkovina  
vazduha i vatre  
iz ovih kotrljajućih  
pustinjskih ruža signala  
tek ono sam što jesam.

Sama svoj glas.  
Zvezda svoje prašine.

Sigurna budućnost  
neopisivosti tvog puta.

## NEVINOST

*Sve ću vas reći Bogu.*  
Promucao je trogodišnjak  
pokošen unakrsnom  
vatrom i ovih i onih.

Na smrt zagrcnut  
unutrašnjim krvarenjem.  
U rodnom gradu koji  
nikako nije uspevao  
biti jedan grad.

Pogođen ranom saznanja.  
Obliven odlaskom. Tamo.  
Gde je Bog. Eustahijeva truba.  
Veliko uho. Od oblaka i svile.

Tamo. Gde kako i priliči  
Stvoritelj će otrti svaku kap  
krvi i plača. I smrti više  
neće biti. Ni jauka. Ni tuge.

Od svake obrisane suze  
načiniće okean. Nepreglednu  
vodu života. Iz koje jedan  
za drugim pristižu horovi  
malih dečaka.

Mimoilaze se sa musavim  
i gladnim dečaćićima  
što izviru  
iz rumenila eksplozija  
i tame. Baruta i vatre.

Pred udžericama i soliterima.  
Na obalama. Pod statuama  
pobede. Na bregovima istoka.  
Odlazu svoja biserna krila.

Jer kuda bi zemlja.  
Kako bi nebo.  
Bez tih uspavanih kometa  
sa groblja astralnih  
svetila koje u lice dana  
vraća solarni vetar.

Bez te neoborive večnosti.  
Te namah namirene prve  
i poslednje prozirnosti.  
Iza video bima s prenosom  
uživo spektakla užasa.

Bez tih malih kandila.  
Jezerskih očiju. Bez te  
neozleđene bespogovorne  
pretpostavke nevinosti.

## **NAKON IZLOŽBE ZLATNIH VENACA**

Miriše Solun u Beogradu.  
Peto stoleće. Maslina  
i mirta. Bršljan i hrast.  
Afroditine afrodizijske čari.  
Neprolazna prolaznost  
gospodarice ljubavi i smrti.

Što poprskala je i ovog  
pirgavog goluba  
što s noge na nogu hodeći  
ispred nas kao dete  
rešava Heraklove  
čvorove. Ulice.

S tezgama krčaga.  
Naročarima za sunce.  
Kišobranima. Narukvicama  
i ešarpama ručne izrade  
novog doba. S nepostojanim  
savezništvom plastike  
i gline. Akrila i svile.

Guguče taj mali  
pripitomljeni grumen  
rozekvarca. Pernata  
knjiga urbane divljine.

Umnožava svoj obris.  
Sred barica mraka.  
Žamora i praha.

Vidi se. Potiče od zvezda.

I sitnim svojim korakom  
pouzdana ovu aleju  
berzi i digitalnih apoteka.  
Ovo zagledanje izloga  
i fotografisanje irisa i lala.  
Presvlači u sjaj piste.  
Novi model nevestinskog doba.

Pun golubije moći.  
Za koju dovoljna je  
trnka mraka. Da plane.  
Sred Disove\* plave apsane.

I ona mrva. S prozora  
Večnog hotela.  
Iz hleba samoće.  
Kuju Tesla\*\* lečeći  
slomljene ptičije  
nožice. Stavljajući ih  
u otvore kartonske kutije  
za obuću. Svakoga jutro.  
Iznova. Uči letenju.  
Misleći pri tom  
Biće. I svetlost.

Pa vidimo.  
Kad prišivamo dugme.

I kad ne vidimo. Vidimo.  
Svetiljčicu. Perlu.  
Apokrifne duše.

*Beograd, mart, 2014.*

\**Dis* – *Vlasislav Petković* (1880-1917), pesnik bola, tajne čovekovog bića, sudbinskog čovekovog bezizlaza, i metafizičkog, astralnog ishoda. Ratni izveštač u Balkanskom ratu (1912), prešao Albaniju u povlačenju (1915), i utopio se pri povratku iz egzila u Francuskoj (1915-1917), kada je nemačka podmornica torpedovala brod kojim je putovao.

\*\* *Tesla* – *Nikola Tesla*, naučnik i izumitelj svetskog glasa (1856-1943), srpskog porekla. Konstruktor generatora struja visoke frekvencije i napona ("Teslin transformator"), transformatora bez jezgra, Tesline zavojnice, ili Teslinog kalema. 2014. godina je označila 71. godinu od njegove smrti i 130 godina od njegovog odlaska u Ameriku. Poslednjih deset godina živeo na 33. spratu hotela "Njujorker", u apartmanu 3327, sa čijeg je prozora svakoga jutro hranio golubove.

## ŠARPIJA

Šesti dan Potopa.  
Srbija, maj 2014.

Labudovi. Usnuli.

Izmakli satelitskim  
snimcima. S kljunovima  
pobodenim unazad.  
U krila i perje. U lisje.

Srećno juče.  
U potopu što raste.

Zelena moja zemlja.

Šarpija. Naseljena  
sudbinama.

Platno. Natopljeno  
telom rane.

*Šarpija* – *charpie* (fr.) – čisto platno raščešljano na niti, koje se nekad upotrebljavalo za zavijanje rana.

## SAKUPLJAČ SVETLOSTI

Izvinite što vas ovako  
presrećem. Na ulici.  
Iz viđenja Vas znam.  
Ako je to neko opravdanje.

Izađem tako.  
Da sakupim malo  
svetlosti.

A htjedoh Vam reći:  
pročitala sam Vaš zapis  
o Malom princu i Ruži.  
Isekla ga. I sačuvala.

Nikuda inače ne idem.  
Nemam nikoga.

Sve lepo što doživim  
pronađem ponekad  
u novinama.

Slažem te isečke  
u kutije od cipela.

Neka se nađu.  
Deci moga brata.

Da ostane nešto.  
Od mene.

Tanja Kragujević was born in 1946, in Senta, which is a picturesque small town on the river Tisa, in Vojvodina (northern Serbia). She graduated Philology from Belgrade University in 1970, and earned her Master of Arts degree in Comparative Literature in 1973. The young poet was only twenty when her earliest poetry collection was published by the first and certainly one of the most distinguished Serbian publishers – Matica srpska, from Novi Sad. The collection appeared in 1966 in a very prestigious serial edition called “First Book.” Since then, Tanja Kragujević has published sixteen poetry collections (the latest one, *The Farewell Motel - “Motel za zbogom”*, came out in 2010), as well as several books of essays regarding both world and Serbian contemporary poetry.

Her new poetry collection *The Bread of Roses* was published in “KOV”, Vršac, in August 2012.

Tanja Kragujević is also an editor who works for eminent Serbian publisher “Agora,” from Novi Sad, presenting the most remarkable world poets - within the collection “Ariel”, with recently published works of Lucija Stupica, Tasos Livaditis, Sarah Kirsch, Stanislaw Barancak, H.M. Enzensberger, etc.

Her poetry and essays have been recognized in Serbia with quite a few awards. Her selected poems appeared in two books, for the time being (2009 and 2010).

The poetry of Tanja Kragujević can be found in about thirty Serbian and foreign anthologies and collections of Contemporary Serbian Poetry, among which the most significant would be: *Poesia Serbia hoy, Debats* (Institució Alfons el Magnànim, Valencia, n.109, 2010/4), *Les Poètes de la Méditerranée* (preface by Yves Bonnefoy, Gallimard & Culturesfrance, 2010); *Hundert grams seele, Ten Decagrams of Soul, The Anthology of Serbian Poetry of the Second Part of Twentieth Century* (edited by Robert Hodel, Leipziger Literaturverlag, 2011), *The Anthology of Serbian Poetry of XX and XXI Century* (Herg Benet Publishers, Bukurest, 2012), or in the international web presentations such as Lyrikline ([www.lyrikline.org](http://www.lyrikline.org)), and her personal website ([www.tanjakragujevic.com](http://www.tanjakragujevic.com)).

She has been invited to present her poetry on quite a number of poetry festivals, to mention only some of them: *Struške večeri poezije* (Macedonia), *The Pushkin Days of Poetry* (Russia), *The Poets Square* (Budva, Montenegro). She also participated in poetry workshops in *Literary Colony of Sićevo* (Serbia, 1994) and *International Literary Colony in Čortanovci* (Serbia, 2008) and at *The First Transbalcan Poetry Festival* (Thessaloniki, 2012.)

Tanja Kragujević lives in Zemun - the town which is only one-bridge-length-apart from Belgrade - with her husband Vasilije Vince Vujić.