

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 20th 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
pouzđano 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 obuču. Svakoga jutra.
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* – *Vlasišlav 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 jutra 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), and her personal website (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.