

SAMPLE
TRANSLATION

LUCIJA STUPICA
SELECTED POEMS
ENGLISH

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Lucija Stupica: Selected Poems

The Seashell

The tender, translucent shell on the windowsill
recalls the sea. A shift of one's view gives rise
to fear in the naked city awaiting colorful
processions of awakened expressions at the station.

Through the ribbed case a still sleepy day is
being strained. Like a tightly fixed boat slowly
weighing anchor. The seashell's surface
reflects the façade of the apartment building standing
opposite, a gray fence, a fence of thoughts, a cloud of ashes.

Your finger tip runs along the spine
to strip the fortress of the skin like a sound signal
of a ship in a fog, the voice of a train, closer and closer,
awakening me, filling me to the brim with the sea.

(from *The Windcatcher*, 2004)

The House Made of Poems

*Silence is all we dread.
There's Ransom in a
Voice— But Silence is
Infinity.*

(Emily Dickinson)

There are various positions in the book of dreams,
there are many of us turning its pages,
Neruda believed the violins would smell of the moon,
I detect silence already upon entering,
once I have crossed the threshold, I am inside only,
but the inside is cozy—I understand why.
Emily Dickinson loved her shelter,
How does the moon smell, I ask upon greeting
as I enter, carefully, silently,
the stairs are wooden and the wood is alive and, at night,
it speaks about every step and shadow and step,
during the day, the house sprinkles itself with the fragrance of gardenias—
I would stay inside, turning the pages of my dreams,
leaning against mornings and afternoons,
it may well rain outside or the sunlight may spill,
yet later one has to get some fresh air, find the voice of the people
and scatter it to the winds, write new lines,
perhaps the gloomiest or the most joyful
ever to be written, to find new voices
and resist those that govern because they do not govern me
even though, for a moment, I may be a mere house number and a sign on the door
and my life may unfold through code systems—
but how to translate dreams to those
who do not believe in the boundlessness of silence.

(from *The Island, the City and Others*, 2008)

Poems from the Second Floor

The second floor would kill poems.
There was something about them that
found them guilty. Prisoners of their own sexes.
Some of them forgot about the dentures in their mouths,
breaking their teeth in vain. There were
no parents to look after them, there was no present time
for them to simply exist. The past had
thrust them into the future. Interest-free.
The interest was due with their youth.

The second floor had made them older,
hollowing them into mornings full of non-expectation,
placing fear into their eyes—as if to the people
seeking, in the glowing whiteness of the screen,
the exit from the movie theater,
full of eagerness to push their burden
over the threshold and dig it into a newly fallen snow.

Based on the film *Songs from the Second Floor* (2000)
directed by Roy Andersson, Sweden

(from *The Island, the City and Others*, 2008)

The Table Poem

They would sit at the same table,
always choosing similar dishes,
ordering the same wine,
recognizing smiles in words
and, conversely, words in smiles,
days would go by,
and years would go by later.
With the table growing increasingly longer
and the dishes more and more diverse,
they would pass words through the waiter's mouth,

finally, on her plate,
after they could no longer hear and hardly see each other,
grew arugula—that tasty weed
in the merciless steadiness of time.

(from *The Island, the City and Others*, 2008)

The Bed

We are standing in front of a painting.
Wrinkled bedding,
two pillows left behind,
the silhouettes of an invisible body—
the traces of everything remaining
after loving, in isolation,
after youth, in aging,
after leaving, in waiting.
The articulation of a possible story,
about someone sleeping alone,
about not being able to sleep,
about looking for someone else.
We attempt to enter the picture, the space,
then to withdraw and hear, feel the difference,
read the anatomy of an absent body.
Our attempts bring us to the unspeakable.
We end up in a white shirt, alongside
the bed, which is still awaiting its time.

A few moments ago:
We are sneaking in a ring of streets,
lying parallel, less accessible,
to hide in a world belonging to ourselves only,
as always, not at all commonplace.
Yet our ways eventually lead up to the Piazza.
“This is the painter I was telling you about, remember?” I say
as we run down the stairs of the museum hand-in-hand,
all fired up in the fresh promise of love,
oblivious of the expiration date marked somewhere.

(a new poem, *Literatura* magazine, 2013)