

Nikola Živanović

## POEMS

Translated by Dennis Vulović

### The End of the Day

Every nightdeath comes in the lodgings of those who sleep  
Through the corridor, the kitchen, the living room, with unheard tramp,  
Between the desk and the sofa, he walks and he peeps,  
Touching the opennovel, completecollection of stamps.

Then he tightens the tablecloth, screws gas ventsthatseep,  
Removesunnecessary hole from the belttootight,  
On the chessboard he linesup the piecesanddeep  
Under the armchair he finds the missingknight.

### Cirrhosis

A wastedlife, cirrhosis, deathdrawingnear,  
Handicapped at twentyseven, all the cashspent.  
Sense of humourhasleft me, brainhas gone allsear,  
Haven'twritten for a long time andthere'slessandless talent.

Andnow I return to poems like a shadow,  
As if on a forcedlabour, withoutexcitement of mind;  
To do whatought to be doneandwaitedsincelong time ago  
Andthenabandonlifeandleave the hopebehind.

Clumsily again, beginner-like, and so sore  
To be justlooking for the rightwordallnightlong;  
To be longing for animage, soundormetaphor  
- Maycrutches be of help with the rhyme of mysong.

### To leave

To leave like it's for ever, the human kind, the credit,  
To cover up to the chest under the white sheet sand bedit.

To stare at the ceiling for days, of thought sand will not a thread,  
To eat the soup from a cup, from the saucer - bread.

All guests thrown out, all books disposed of in a box,  
Keep in touch with the world by having chicken pox.

Nothing but flu, jaundice and tuberculosis.  
Rheumatism, fatigue, inflamed brain's all that poses

As a testimony to the season that looms.  
To put down all the blind sand not to air the rooms.

Of all people out there to only see the doc -  
With no calendar and without a clock.

## Trash

Removed from the pollution of woods and of plains and of waters so far:  
From cans and plastic carrier bags and the broken bottles of wine,  
We are inhabiting the housing tenement blocks that sterilise dare,  
But around here only life is grime.

The spit, the shit and the leftover food. Nature indeed finds it so hard  
To put down its foot, to hide its track. Trash piles to every one exposed.  
To decay in laboratory conditions, just like before the God,  
Lifeless, senseless, into nothing decomposed.

## Beer Festival in Marshal Biryuzov Street

Living in Marshal Biryuzov Street  
I had an impression that center of Belgrade  
Was exactly in my bedroom.  
I lived quietly and dully:  
Wouldn't go out for days on end,  
Not interested in charms of the capital,  
Theatre plays or literary events.  
Just lying, reading and drinking beer.  
When I get up out of the bed  
And step towards the kitchen or toilet,  
It seems like I move towards the suburbia.

## Ragged Trousers

I hate it when after making love  
You go to the bathroom timidly,  
Hiding your nudity.

I love it when you go proudly  
Like a labourer in ragged trousers

## All Slogans of our Fatherland

As a seven year old I had a fight  
With an older bloke from the neighbourhood.  
He had a very strong jaw and a sneering glance.  
Rushed towards him with my fists and my nails.  
Struck me down and started to hit.  
We wrestled, pulled our hair, bit each other  
Until a passer-by broke us up.  
I went home, ashamed, mucky,  
Mymouth was full of grass,  
And my t-shirt streaked with illegible stripes;  
As if on it were written  
Classifieds, advertisements, notices  
And all slogans of our fatherland.

## Girls on Bicycles

If he could see them, Pythagoras would be delighted,  
Young and strong, they co-ordinate their body movements  
With the symmetrical circles of tyres and pedals,  
They compare geometries and claim precision  
Of youth, birth giving and natural disasters.

## Blue Plum

By the crossroad near Zeleni Venac,  
In the shadow, behind the kiosk  
A small wild plum grew.  
During the day its presence  
Is unnoticed by the passers-by,  
But when night falls and streets get deserted,  
Clearly it is in cahoots with the traffic light  
That directs an invisible traffic.

## Intimacy

A well known sound of your footsteps  
While you walk up the stairs.  
Keys that jingle in your hands –  
You enter, my heart beat speed.  
The ripple of flush tank and tap.  
You use the same toiletries  
As I have a little while ago.  
You spend too much time in there.  
Removing make-up, taking a shower,  
Applying cream and what-not.  
Men don't have a notion  
Of the many ways in which  
A young female body could be used.  
Then you look into the mirror long,  
Comparing your face to the one  
I compared mine in the morning.  
You flush the water once more. You exit.  
You switch off the light; and, after some time  
A quiet snoring noise comes from your room.  
I can fall a sleep at last.

## Dice have been rolled

Our small destinies,  
Uncertain, every day decisions.  
Over the cities of south Europe  
The nightfalls and millions of people  
Await their tomorrow's fate;  
But chance is being missed  
Within the big numbers' law,  
And new day only brings a coffee and a sandwich,  
A first cigarette and a morning paper,  
With ever the same number of pages  
Reserved for the crime column.

## The Sun

Fields of wheat are to blame  
For our religious delusions.

All tales of kingdom come,  
Of immortal spirit are underlined by belief  
That afterlife is only the beginning  
Of yet another in this world,  
In the breeze, in the sun.

### **Citizen of the World**

I don't feel like going to Paris.  
I dread the thought  
Of having to drop by the Louvre,  
Look at the paintings, revise  
The history of art, have an opinion,  
Be ready to answer the question  
What was it like in France.  
Don't care about the opera or literary events;  
If I loved art, I loved it  
As something I could find in my room,  
Dig it out of the shelf,  
I loved it because I didn't like to go out.  
I'm trying to avoid the Notre Dame  
And climbing up the Eiffel Tower.  
Don't need to be reminiscing the past.  
My thoughts are even inept before daily problems.  
Even if I go to Paris,  
I'd like to find a quiet hotel room,  
Far away from Champs-Élysées and art and the hubbub,  
To lie down and close my eyes.  
I'd come back from a trip,  
Knowing that I'm a citizen of the world  
And that for a moment  
I felt in Paris like at home.

### **Anathema**

Well if there is no one wife,  
Let me not descend into the kingdom of shadows as a man;  
Let me join the dead as a cat or as a rat;  
So if some acquaintance meets me and shouts:  
"What are you doing here, how was life?"  
I will meow, I will squeak.

