

Ivan C. Lalić

The Raven's Monologue

The dove, I believe, is a much better bird
For the job, for bearing, in its weary little beak,
News already condensed into a symbol,
Into a leaf, a hope, a model for a painter,
Billposting peace. This is why I choose absence,
Now the fountains of the deep are stopped,
And the windows of heaven. I chose clear-headedness:
Before me, the deluge. My black feathers carry the sun,
I shrewdly mind my own business, from under the ooze
I pick out, deftly, the eyes of sinners. I croak.
They will paint me on escutcheons, and standing
In the snow, black as a letter. They will teach me
To say *Nevermore*. I will be famous.
The dove, however, seems made for the job.
In its form may hope grow feathers,
In my feathers may horror gain form.

The Passionate Measure

Translated from the Serbo-Croat by Francis R. Jones*
London, Anvil Press Poetry, 1989: 21

*Translator's note: See Genesis viii and Proverbs, xxx, 7