

*Bridge over the Watermark*

Did you watch the hispid fly  
follow a flightpath between the lampshade  
and the curtain, or did your  
ears just lock onto its sound, the way  
seals' nostrils lock onto air?  
The air's secret things are revealed to you  
only under water, you swim,  
your lungs read. You scrape  
a pass grade in underwater history  
and maths before surfacing  
and breathing it all out.  
You are the one held in the lungs of the room.  
It's pleasant to hear the afternoon  
rain beat on the window, but  
dampness soaks the ceiling too,  
up to the attic, picking through dusty  
planks you fooster behind  
the chimney and stumble upon  
the mice's larder: this is still  
water territory, you tell yourself,  
you are alone, and speech too  
is water-speech,  
you read it, spelling without  
writing it down, watermarks float  
before your eyes in the half-light,  
half-eaten walnuts fill the pantry  
to overflowing. But it's not raining,  
there's no need to get out of bed  
though you lift your glance  
from your book to the hispid fly  
in the window. Together you stare  
out and see your neighbour standing outside  
his house, self-assured and talking

to himself. It's nothing but  
reading, if you and the fly watch him  
together you're reading him, while  
from behind his back he reads the house,  
the dead weight of which reads the layers of stone.  
Here, under your house, there used to be  
a cemetery, from the cracks in the floor  
hair sometimes sprouts, sometimes fingernails  
stick to the soles of slippers,  
for the hair and the nails  
of those here below keep growing.  
The roots of the quince tree in the yard  
are tangled in hair, and when autumn comes  
hair grows on the skin of its fruits.  
There is no speech, only reading,  
the tree reads, and so do the tangles of hair, they read,  
the book, sliding sideways in your lap, reads,  
you sleep, perhaps are already asleep, but  
the fly is still airborne,  
this feels reassuring. The water  
of life sluices dizzily into the well,  
if you went out into the yard now you'd see  
a brick sinking down slowly. This is how it begins.  
Yes, this is how it begins.

*(Translated by Zsolt Komáromy)*