

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)