

Stav vody...

Stav vody, říční režim, práce, puls
západní strany oblohy teď večer,
v záhybu řeky měkké čtverce vzduchu,
dokud je poslední pták neodvleče.

Z hladiny trčí lávka, kroky,
vrásčitá pláž, skopnuté boty písek,
co si tě nenápadně prohlíží,
led, co tě prořízne, i tempa. Nevrátí se

nic. Snad rybář v loďce, na obraze,
pozorující odstín svého splávku,
ten, co se shledává už jenom s předměty.
Hřmění a hukot. Otloukají lávku.

6/II/00

Four Dispatches

Preening himself on the top branch the magpie,
calm as the eye that sees the coming storm.
The moon rose over this unseeing, yellow...
As yellow as the dreaming page at night.

The harnessed river glinted and drove off
loose flocks into the landscape. Then patiently
they gathered in the reaches of the clouds
and, looming, came with reinforcements back.

II October 2000

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The work, the river's watermark, the swell
of sunset on the west side of the sky.
Soft folds of air caught in the current's turn
until the last bird takes them when it flies.

A jetty propped up on the surface, footsteps,
a wrinkled beach, a pair of shoes, and sand,
although withdrawn, which watches you discreetly,
ice, which razors you, the strokes. Point

of no return. Man on a punt, depicted,
perhaps observing his float's glint and play.
Who now encounters only things themselves.
The roar and thunder. The jetty rubbed away.

6 November 2000

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The river's surface folds in black and matt
like churning leaves across the tops of trees.
The gears and engine draw the distance near.
Fields opposite stretch off to the interior.

Streetlamps mark the crook-locked cars in gold.
Ceramic foliage clinks against itself.
The river bed moves slowly from the depths—
it flees the coming winter's clamp of ice.

7 October 2000

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Snow general on outlying fields—now gone.
And still there is no feeling of revelation,

an aftertaste of transformation, if that,
when you observe the planes—empty, flat—

and hold the very distance in your hand.
The rooks delight and fly above the land,

a black panel, the shadow of an airship,
a string of tugboats uniform in shape

which pulls along the same and single track
the surface, which then coils and closes back,

the river's bridge and bed, the river isle,
the shore, the works and days of river life.

Like black hills crowned with the constant thunder
of a highway, like weather's distant trundle

inland, the shifting brilliancies and planes
at lay-bys and at dirty filling stations,

there where the shadows grade back into murk,
and headlights carve quick frescos from the dark.

Like a gaze blacked out by closing forest walls.
Like the forest broken open by wood trails,

like wood trails which the forest dark then seals,
like the forest razed to leave outlying fields,

as matt as these hinds poised before the sedge,
a beast of prey that stands at something's edge,

and an eye behind glass that turns behind it.

9 October 2000

(Translated from the Czech by Justin Quinn)