

PSALM

How leaky are the borders of man-made states!
How many clouds float over them scot-free,
how much desert sand sifts from country to country,
how many mountain pebbles roll onto foreign turf
in provocative leaps!

Need I cite each and every bird as it flies,
or alights, as now, on the lowered gate?
Even if it be a sparrow—its tail is abroad,
though its beak is still home. As if that weren't enough—it keeps fidgeting!

Out of countless insects I will single out the ant,
who, between the guard's left and right boots,
feels unobliged to answer questions of origin and destination.

If only this whole mess could be seen at once in detail
on every continent!
Isn't that a privet on the opposite bank
smuggling its hundred-thousandth leaf across the river?
Who else but the squid, brazenly long-armed,
would violate the sacred territorial waters?

How can we speak of any semblance of order
when we can't rearrange the stars
so we know which one shines for whom?

Not to mention the reprehensible spreading of the fog!
And the dusting of the steppe over its entire range
as though it weren't split in two!
And voices carried over accommodating air waves:
summoning squeals and suggestive gurgles!

Only what's human can be truly alien.
The rest is mixed forest, undermining moles, and wind.