

Nicolae Breban · *Romania*

INDIAN SUMMER

For Hualing and Paul

The sky is only a white lens
black, blue.
Your large dress covers my eyes.
Your hands flow from your shoulders
like a ribbon of smoke.
The world is a dream, a repeated summer.
Stop and listen a moment. Soon
somebody, something will shout from the field
a tiny animal, a bird drowned in green
or our old European scepticism
facing this Indian Summer.

The leaves were stuck on the branches as soon as I arrived.
Blind leaves. With thousands of eyes, they wait for me
in this eternal summer, Indian Summer.
And I, the intruder, found them with a sign of relief,
of mistrust.
And I salute them grandly,
exactly like a gentleman of the nineteenth century—
(a century which evidently never existed!).
The tall trees accepted me with irony.
Irony is their candor, these great floorlamps of the Midwest.
I looked around me, I turned around,
and slowly, the axis of the landscape became my axis.
And soon, around us was only a fragile balance
between hundreds of leaves, blind and alive,
and all my necessary prejudices.

I watch the Iowa River, which flows like a dumbfounded tree.
A river is a tree lying down, the statue of a fallen tree.
And the air, when the air moves nonchalantly it makes
waves of bronze on its fluid bark.
Oh, eternal tree, obeying who knows what inclined plane,
who knows what colossal prejudice!

Like a tradition of this plain, vast place.
Iowa River, my gossiping friend,
I lie next to you, confident,
awaiting your first messenger: the long serpent,
dizzy from its solitude, begins to climb my arm,
begins to tattoo my hand.
Just like your wife, your lover,
who goes to sleep on your arm, which goes numb,
but you don't move your arm,
even if it breaks from your body.

Tell him to leave. Tell him to leave right now.
Tell him to go far away.
I am bored with myself!
But where did it lodge, this little street corner,
from who knows what periphery . . .
And most of all—(like a river stone, on its side)
—the pure oval of your face:
Alone. Authoritative. Impenetrable.
Oh, I want to turn around you, perhaps!
Image without body.
Dreaming head, hung in my memory,
tongue of God knows what clock.

translated by Malinda Cox