

“Plastic Sea” (excerpt)

by Mirko Bonné

...Each black meter of water, rolling past ominously
mute, had the momentum of over three
hundred stacked-up fuel tankers,
by someone’s calculations.
Meadows, playgrounds, riparian
woodlands, the paths and many streets,
as well as bridges, lots, docks, a big shed at
the foot of the railway embankment holding God
knows what long-forgotten junk were
submerged and sank for days
and for weeks. Children
asked whether the water would
stay like this now, so high, so dark, and
so, so bad. Yes, I said to a little girl
with an eye patch, it looks like
it’ll stay like this from
now on. Ah well.
The world is
turning black.
And the neighbor,
arm in arm with his wife,
dog invisible, gazing at a bend in
the Alster where the river used to come
around the curve and fling its gold-brown
glitter at the bank, eyed the nightmarish
immensity of water and said hollowly
that never in his life, since he
sailed boats here as a
schoolboy, had he experienced
the like on the Alster, never had it
happened before, not even in a dream,
in which everything is possible, was it
possible. Too quickly for the darting pupils
to follow, the river rolled under the Fuhlsbütteler
railway bridge southward to the Free and
Hanseatic city. I saw three plastic
canisters and pictured a raft
you could build with them.
High water, said the stunned
neighbor. Floods. They’d always
happened, summer or winter,
in the fall or especially in the spring,
as soon as the snowmelt descended on Stormarn.
But this here, the black water masses, such
a draggled park, never, really, no