

## GREAT WATER BOATMAN

Patiently  
I'm waiting for scraps to fall  
on my table of water,  
the surface of the pond I hang from  
with the air at my abdomen's tip  
buoying me.

Let them blunder,  
alight for slaughter: they'll find  
water's not solid  
and jerk , thrash, send  
out ripples I'll sense  
with the spikes of my feet  
and glide towards with my strong  
legs' paddles,

efficient oarsman,  
towards their end  
at my piercing beak.

I'll suck the bodies dry  
of spider, gnat, or fly.  
I live, and they must die.



*Notonecta glauca*, the Great Water Boatman, has a long beak, visible here, folded back, for stabbing its prey. It remains attached to the underside of the water surface by means of air trapped below its wing cases — for it can also fly, from pond to pond. The water surface is visible here as the line at the top of the picture. In life, the creature measures 2cm.