

Rocket

Kocbek

Kocbek wrote the poem "Rocket" in 1969, the year the first man set foot on Moon. The same year a young Czech student, named Jan Palach, burned himself down in a public square of Prague as an act of desperate protest against the Communist repression in his country after the Soviet occupation of Czechoslovakia the previous year. Kocbek relates both events in an unique way, affirming the precedence of man over machine (the both "rockets"), civilization over technology, and individual human sacrifice over what he calls "an obsessed reiteration of a spinning World/ Caught up in death and darkness".

Rocket (Raketa)

Moonlight is dangerous,
Mothers used to say,
Sleeping walkers on nocturnal roofs
Are very suspicious,
Fathers used to judge,
And yet children were dazzled
By the fireworks of a mad crowd,
And this mathematical excursion of force to the Moon
Is the greatest fraud of all time,
An obsessed reiteration of a spinning World,
Caught up in death and darkness.

Time is more mysterious than space,
History books heavier than atlases,
Earth is the most colorful of rainbows
And man is hotter than the Sun,
Among the bright Cherubim
The flame of spirit is the most irrepressible,
A burning rocket named Palach
Has measured history