

# LOVE THE WORDS

2022 WINNERS' ANTHOLOGY



Every year, 'Love the Words' (a quote from Dylan Thomas) asks for contributions to its annual poetry competition as part of International Dylan Thomas Day, 14 May. This year, writers around the world were asked to pen a poem on the theme of 'water', inspired by Dylan's name - which means 'son of the sea' - as well as by his seaside, childhood home in Swansea, and his estuary home, and famous writing shed, in Laugharne. Writers were free, in this year's contest, to interpret 'water' in any way they wished, and to write in any form. All ages were welcome to take part, and judges Hannah Ellis and Mab Jones were thrilled to see familiar names from previous years amongst the entrants as well as many new names. There were, once again, poems and entries from all around the globe, with over 400 entries received. It was a very hard job to whittle this down, but we did, to roughly 50 poems - a record number for our anthology this year! - and, this time around, we found it too difficult to choose single winners and would like, instead, everyone included here to be able to say that they 'won' the competition. We only wish we could publish all 400+ poems! We're incredibly grateful to all of you who entered; the standard of writing this time was impeccable; and we hope you enjoy this year's resulting anthology, which demonstrates, we hope, our shared wish to always, and forever, 'love the words'. It's what Dylan would have wanted, we feel, and we're very, very grateful to everyone who shared their words with us.

## Birthplace

These waters hold the weight of my beginnings.  
Wave-mothered river-veins  
run to this cove.  
I beckon driftwood  
memories, sweep them into  
consciousness.  
There is hush then  
the chatter of iron pebbles – crackling  
war cries of old Odysseys,  
fossils of waters broken over beds,  
the flurry of laughter rushed in halted.  
I gulp time.  
The pregnant curve of  
this cliff face calls, says *come home, my darling,*  
*to float here in sleep, until skin melts,*  
*becomes shoreline, silt, stone.*

Sophie Lewis, Wales

## High water at Le Saie

A stark landscape of lunar at tide-low, yet  
to venture at tide-full  
is a delve into wonderment.

Croissants jiggle in the cloth-bag at my hip,  
buttery aromas air-mingle with salt-scent.  
Blankets of sea-shallow silken our skin, alter  
perspective.

Ocean-full, we lug three litres of blue up the muddied  
path, dip our toes in the bucket of cool at the top,  
hear it whisper, come back tomorrow.

*\* Le Saie is a small bay in Jersey*

Sandra Noel, Jersey



## **This is sweetest seaweed dripping power**

This is sweetest seaweed dripping power,  
this is.

Look at it go,  
scalding your nerves,  
firing the chord of scales  
into a coarse fibre that moves  
solemnly back to front,  
chipping the air,  
dragging the roots,  
your roots,  
anchored by flint.

The sea, a cloudy green  
and slap happy,  
out there to mind  
its cold business.  
You're there with a speckled forethought,  
a distant shade,  
blue tinged  
staining the land.

My thoughts become cloudy  
in turn,  
to make you levitate  
for a brief time,  
until the roots take hold  
of the flint that cuts to the bone –  
drip the seaweed eyeward,  
fill my veins with blue brine –  
these water margins are all mine.

Richard Powell, Wales

## **Cockle Gatherers**

Where the edge of the grey land fades  
into the greyness of the water,  
I watch the cockle gatherers

bound in woollen layers against  
the adhesive wind; they take the safe  
path through salt marsh and tidal creeks

animating the early morning  
horizon, breathing life into the  
struggling day; with rakes and riddles

at low tide they work the cockle  
colonies nurtured in the softened,  
wave-swept sand of the estuary.

Life is measured here by ebb ~ and ~  
flow ~ ebb ~ and ~ flow.

Jean Salkild, Wales



## Tides of Time

Coming, going, flowing,  
it flows beneath and above us  
it swirls around like a clock  
maybe it tells us the time  
because our ancestors flow  
beneath and above us,  
beneath and above us,  
and they are beyond and before time.  
Water is the essence of us, it heals  
and shows us things it sweeps up to the shore  
and things that others might not see.  
Water is our harmony.

Ava Gwenan John, 12, Wales



## Laugharne Lament

Late last night I went whispering  
in oyster shells  
with my eyes

searching for someone I lost  
hearing the depth of a voice  
sonorous with all the joys and sorrows  
of lovely Laugharne

I have saved and stacked several shells  
high clattering on the sink side  
near the water taps

small craggy homes  
of soft little neighbours  
gobbled up and gone

the mirror of each passing  
a small nicotine coloured stain  
where lately  
they maintained a limpet hold on life  
ocean dwellers in the sea of all our time  
and other times.  
small cling stain clear to the naked eye  
within the cream smooth petal  
the inner petal  
the smooth boat shaped petal  
in which, if you knew how to steer,  
you could escape.

And I am one  
won over, by the angle  
the grace  
the gliff of gulls wing  
outstretched at ease,

gliding silently on the wind  
Over the boathouse

and out at sea  
the great white angel

The Albatross

mirroring the salute

Judith Ann Toms, Wales



## **Shoreline – Iceland**

Lava fields of burnt soil, sparse cover of  
stunted grass, brown and sickly.  
Rivers of black water make small islands  
where gulls gather to curse the Norse gods.

A sun, sodden from wind lashed spray  
surrenders behind the stacked grey cloud.  
Slowly the sea buckles, collapses on itself,  
in a slough etched out on the sand.

The waves thrown onto the shore  
collapse at the feet of the keening wind  
that flings fist-fulls of rain in temper at low houses.  
The rust clad decaying shelters shift on a headland  
undermined by the grasp of the withdrawing tide.  
Below, crabs dance on the bones of drowned sailors.

Sean Smith, Ireland

## Water Prayer

*to Dylan, Son of the Sea*

Seagulls and restless rooks  
challenge the wind  
on this winter morning.

Under a pearl sky  
the waves sing the rising sun -  
the first glimpse of light on the horizon  
fades too soon.

Here and now  
Dylan's words resound:  
*The waters of the heart  
push in their tides...\**

And from the ancient cliff  
I pause and listen to  
the voice of the sea:

a water prayer

that softly evaporates  
among the fleeing clouds.

*\*from: Light breaks where no sun shines*

Lidia Chiarelli, Italy

## what the sea doesn't want

right  
as  
rain falls

winter sun -  
carpe diem  
ice dragon

breakwater -  
the sea gives up  
its secrets

another selfie  
on the ocean  
supermoon

childhood -  
skimming stars  
on the ocean

sea sons go

Tim Gardiner, UK

## 5 HAIKUS ON WATER

first pitter patter  
record playing in circles  
a tree frog answers

tears drop like dewdrops  
even amidst my dreaming  
i wipe and row on

jackdaw stands quiet  
dandelion dropping peace  
i hear the snow fall

a pair of blackbirds  
in misty autumn showers  
dancing beak to beak

shimmering koi swims  
beneath the dancing ripples  
learning to make peace

Iona Mandal, 15, UK



## Whatum Lake at Morning

The reflection wavers: miniature wakes quivering  
with morning breath, beating against  
a protruding log, the fallen snag  
of sunrise gray. I listen to the lapping:  
a dog thirsty for more or a child, clear-eyed,  
sailing a boat across the vastness of his bathtub.  
The tides tug endless against the shore.  
When did the lake become so small?

Ana Michalowsky, US

## After the Storm

The river looks like it's been flushed with Domestos,  
its bedrock as if it's been jet-washed, the water is gin clear,  
its banks and flanks air-brushed with up-rooted trees, broken  
branches lying in unnatural poses. The 'flood-line' more like  
a 'washing line,' with plastics of every colour—Sainsbury's  
Asda's and Tesco's hanging as if put out to dry,  
a wheelie bin from No. 5 jammed against a bridge, immovable  
granite blocks tossed aside like marbles. There's been a huge  
bank-slip into the river, open like a visceral sore, its blackness  
revealing past burials of discarded coal and old miners' boots;  
after all this, the Dipper and Goosander, just before the smile.

F. David Potter, Wales

## RESTLESS CALM

Each day change; rise and fall,  
Constant, the stalking heron and ballyragging gull.  
Bleakest grey or incredible blue, above tawny shifting sands,  
fashioning a new passage every day.  
Salt mingles with fresh water,  
Both anoint the green marsh,  
Slop against the desultory keel  
Middle distant white farms punctuate impossible green.  
Across to Black Scar,  
No two days the same,  
The ferry now forgotten.  
Its shelter seen not sought,  
Blessed are we who stand and pray by the flood.

Tim Baynes

## Words in Water

I.

The words are drenched and sudsy  
scented lilac from your thick, milled soap.

Held dripping from the bath, they linger  
in a mildly opalescent mist

all sense drowned in pastel innuendo.

II.

The words go skinny dipping  
off the turtle-backed boulder

into the country of the dragonflies  
where water lilies cup allusive shivers

and raft them into impassive green regard.

III.

The words ripple into the early  
morning creek, spreading imminence

of uplift into dozing brookies,  
rousing a shoal of golden shiners,

drifting into a swaying susurrant of cattails.

IV.

The words shiver in the rain.

Kate Falvey, US

## **a bath**

only in winter  
when the fire is on

shower first  
like they do in Japan  
soap, scrub, rinse  
enamel, glass, tile

run the hot tap  
run the cold, less so

gather towel, book  
cup and kettle of hot

clumps of epsom salts  
soon dissolve

dip toe in  
aye-ah, boiling hot

run in more cold  
much faster

halogen heater on  
step in

crouch gingerly  
turn down cold to a trickle

ease in, dry hands  
pick up book

not a precious one  
pages may turn wavy

finish cup, pour refills  
set aside empty kettle

bend spine back repeatedly  
to read inner margin words

count pages to next break  
why the long chapters

fingertips, wrinkly  
water, cold

a crick in the neck  
is that the time, flippin' heck

ruth macinnes, UK

## **Small wave**

In the waiting room there is a sun-bleached print  
of Hokusai's Great Wave.

The sailors hold on. Ride it out, ride it out;  
spumey fingers deceptively cartoonish.

We travel with them. The print almost succeeds  
in its task of dragging me from land to sea

but the smudges of green and brown seem child-like  
keeping me ashore. Maybe

you would have been an artist,  
modestly like Hokusai saying

*by the time I am ninety  
I will be competent.* I wanted

to see you, crayon in hand,  
a frown of concentration

and irritation when I try to help.  
The picture is suspended from a triangular string

and to me, pacing the room, suggests different, better futures.  
Will they survive or drown? That unknowing

is there, each time I walk back and forth.  
Three points of intensity on foreground faces

echoing the triangle of wave  
which itself imitates ageing Fuji in the distance.

Unbidden, the lines and shapes  
form a foetal scan. There is no intentional cruelty in this

and I'm sure it never occurred to whoever hung the picture.  
It just seems that way from the perspective,

which kneels for carelessness, randomness.  
We still have the shiny, glossy paper. It rolls like a wave.

Mark Blayney, Wales

## Wind on Water

Wind on water, darkness, lightness,  
shade and sunshine, shadows, brightness.  
Ripples, stipples, stillness shattered,  
waves and dimples, colours scattered.  
Piebald, patterned, dappled, speckled,  
cross-hatched, criss-crossed, fractured, freckled.  
Wind on water, gleam and shimmer,  
sparkle, dazzle, glint and glimmer.

David Lindsay Barnard, England

## Seaside Sandwiches

Sand-dusted banana sandwiches take me back  
to a childhood beach in the 1970s.

I can hear the waves under monochrome sky  
safe behind bright stripes of windbreak.

Biting into cloud-white bread and thick yellow spread  
I'm transported by Tupperware, squashed and warm.

A perfect picnic, past still present,  
as I close my eyes and taste the grit

as it crunches  
between my teeth.

Janette Ostle, England

## Decision time

Hope,  
drip, drop,  
godless trust,  
just like water.  
Watching chemo flow...  
Plastic pouch above mum,  
wasting hours, tick, tock, plop.  
She feels better, worse, final. Pray  
to whom it may concern, drip, drop, stop.  
Become flood. Become ocean. Become peace.

Britta Benson, Scotland

## At Tyne Watersmeet

This winter the river pulled apart  
the landscape, exposing raw edges.  
Deep in silt, the willows wade  
and debris hangs in the ash trees  
like their fists of keys. Traceries  
of distant birches are thumbprints  
pressed against the white throat  
of the sky.

New-laid sand  
on the path scuffles your steps  
as Warden Hill comes and goes  
behind cloud. Soundless on the water  
a goosander dives, her wake  
drifting downstream. A blade of sunlight  
lifts the ochre-dusted catkins on the hazel.  
This is all you have.

Claire Lynn, England



## Dawn by Lindisfarne

Grey bleeding, rose tinting, line running to sword edge horizon  
Light stealing, mount floating, rock rising on far off Island  
Sea swelling, eerie creaking, anchor tugging a rocking  
boat  
Sand unsteady, feet spreading, wave  
breaking to froth lace  
Curlew crying, lonely singing, sound  
skirling to thick air split  
Haar building, shallow lying, surface  
dressing to besiege Island  
Light growing, pink leaching, flesh burning to  
ignite spark  
Glow obscuring, summit darkening, form lining the  
ancient keep  
Orange bursting, gold whitening, orb blooming over bowing  
Earth  
Core exploding, water hurtling, skies surging to swallow Heaven

Venus twinkling, east sinking, hood winking to blink to blind  
Eyes fleeing, refuge seeking, ink blackening in roll up vellum  
Bell tolling, sound vibrating, Sea amplifying the death  
of Dawn  
Pulse fading, seagull keening, choir pitching to  
echo chorus  
Breeze rising, salt stirring, nostrils  
tangling as senses wake  
Sight shifting, sand seeping, sea  
departing in rock pool tears  
Crab offering, foam fringing, kelp mourning by  
fronds bereft  
Tide falling, causeway flowing, path revealing poles  
that mark.  
Flashing forwards to scalding toast, to melting butter  
swimming,  
To steaming tea, to cradling hands, to numb fingers stinging.

Kate Sheehan-Finn, England

## DROWNING STROKE

A kind of stroke you never have to learn,  
it comes installed already like the long  
lazy crawl you practiced in the womb  
before you could even breathe. Your feet go down,

your head goes up, like someone standing  
up in water, or trying to, like someone  
who's forgotten everything they've ever known  
about how to float, how to keep on living

in this world. You stick your arms up, waving  
about for help. You stretch your mouth wide open  
for a final breath or two. You turn  
streamlined as a fish, a stone, then something

grabs you from below and, like a midwife,  
pulls you, gasping, backwards out of life.

Ciarán Parkes, Ireland

## Swan, Roath Park Lake

She sleeps on the nest:

all the sweet busy-ness around: lovers,  
dripping ice cream, kids with cutty dogs. And the water -  
as much blue-brown glass. One heron. A pair of ardent ducks  
dive the margins. No ripples. No people on the lake.

She sleeps on the nest:

a wrinkled poo bag woven underneath, pastel wafer  
wrappers - one from the family above - a squished can in the sticks.  
Swan, coiled like a punishment, on the concrete embankment.  
This is precarious nesting. She holds her sleep for eggs' sake,

knotted tight against the shit of the world  
much like us, eyes closed; until the evening water  
redoubles her, washes her. The dogs recede.  
The kids toddle into their noisy twilight.  
One white mother will sail out, towing a stream  
of rippling not-yet cygnets in her wake.

Lesley James, Wales



## Rivers.

Formed by rain collecting in gullies,  
Steadily filling up barren slits  
Whilst awaiting the next *splosh*.

So that glistening orbs of liquid,  
Can fall and splash,  
Into an upcoming creek,  
Brooke,  
River.

Each drop a chance at creation.

Though water is harsh.  
Hurricanes and summer showers,  
Plummeting into trampled soil,  
Meandering around pebbles and roots.

Over, under, through.  
Besides, into, above.  
Oh, water flows freely.  
No matter the size of the root  
Nor the tree or the dam.

Beautiful and ambitious.  
Strong-willed and nurturing and powerful.  
Creating me, you, him, her, them, it.

Organic life as a whole.  
Harsh. Yet fair.  
For the hurricanes creating rivers,  
Let rivers create life.

Holly Rose Biddulph, 15, England

## DAWNING

Only then does he see  
that water has a skin –  
when pond skaters step  
with nimble toes –  
pinprick spines  
on the sleek surface.  
Impossible as a split atom.

Jo Mazelis



## Run Wild and Free like a Waterfall

The trickle and crash of the water,  
heard from a mile away.  
A warm sensation rippled throughout the atmosphere  
the clambering up the steep steps  
made the adventure seem even more magical.

We drowned in dog slobber  
from the constant uphill battle between land and water.  
Our feet were perishing from the stroll  
across the shallow pond,  
in intervals and interludes we slipped on the coated, mossy rocks.

Looking down, we noticed an absence of litter,  
unlike our hometown which had become a plethora of debris.

Mist dampened our hair  
like dewdrops on green grass needles.  
Eventually, the towering waterfall peeked into our peripheral vision,  
playfully enchanting us with its liquefied spell.

Struggling and continuing,  
we were motivated by the astonishing view  
that we were about to bless our eyes with.

The burning feeling that had emanated throughout our feet,  
made us feel alive, even though every part of us  
was drowning in exhaustion,  
our muscles relaxed,  
relieving our fatigued skin as we removed our bulky walking boots and  
plummeted into the  
trickle  
and  
crash  
of the  
endless  
waterfall.

Evie Hope, 13, UK

## Surprise Canyon

this thunderstorm will fill the creek  
past battered ruins of a ghost town  
to whom then will the water speak

rock, sand and scrub in desert bleak  
gully washer flash flood rolling down  
this thunderstorm will fill the creek

golden dreams 'neath far away peak  
noisy miners bustling boom town  
to whom then will the water speak

of time now gone and humans weak  
and so all their happy dreams drown  
this thunderstorm will fill the creek

tossing rocks its damage to wreak  
carrying off the souls of the town  
to whom then will the water speak

where on the walls run lizards sleek  
until once again the rain comes down  
this thunderstorm will fill the creek  
to whom then will the water speak

Mark A. Fisher, US

## Bay of Stars

Far below this arch of sun-baked stones,  
or below the cedar's cliff-top surge,  
a wash of slate-grey water  
muted by distance  
draws, drags in.

At the full & pull of the tide  
lit by waves' white moon-froth  
along granite-creamed edges,  
the bay is dark,  
so deep  
under shadows cast  
by beech & oak long curved  
by longer winds:  
thick with midsummer leaf.

You trail your fingers  
through the sky's milky waters:  
trace Cassiopeia, Orion, Ursa Major  
between the darkened ripple of trees swaying  
in the branches of the salt, salt sea.

Lizzie Ballagher, UK

## Shapeless as water

after Dylan Thomas

All our lives we carry our outlines,  
sad silhouettes of many selves  
shaken to order like cocktails.  
The teen gets breasts, is poured  
over ice, in sugar-rimmed glasses.  
They are watching her new hips  
for too much. She checks herself  
in shop windows, shape-shifts  
her pulled-in waist, calorie-counts  
towards another skipped lunch.  
Birth after birth she has to get  
back in trim, lose the baby fat,  
keep herself, not let herself go.  
When the zips struggle, buttons  
break the rules, size matters  
more than was ever intended.  
She hides in shapeless costumes,  
puppet dances with their hands  
shoved in all her flabby corners,  
until the last mirror unfriends her.  
A woman becomes her own ghost,  
watered-down enough to fit into  
every crack, a spent force in a glass.

Pat Edwards, Wales

## The Fly Glass

I am conducting an experiment  
to see how long the glass of water  
will sit on the windowsill  
if I do not move it.

It has been three days.  
You pass it when you condescend  
to morning, and again  
when we rise to bed.

You have not seen how the dust  
settles in it nor how the flies  
have sacrificed themselves  
on the water's surface.

I think it could sit there forever.

Tonight, I will bring it to your bedside  
and while you sleep, substitute it  
for your clean glass so when you wake  
from sleep to sip

you will taste my waiting.

Ellen Davies, Wales

## A PSALM FOR THE SON OF THE SEA

As when, tossing itself into the air,  
the condor seeks the impulse of the wind  
to challenge, with its matchless weight, the gravity  
of its ascent alone to weave its flight,

so whales must warm  
their blood in the abyss of the maternal  
sea, where experts say that hulking mammals  
raise the heavenly blue of their lone, plaintive hymn  
in decibels of truth and agony.

From that deep void,  
Son of the Sea, before you  
forests rise where *the force that*  
*through the green fuse drives* life's hymn will  
raise over the depths of time the singing cry that nestled  
the bitter-sweet *flower* of your voice.

Rei Berroa, US



## Elements

I read that the human body  
was seventy percent water.  
I know this to be true: you

hear the drops as they spill-splash.  
White heat turns to water,  
as the river washes along years

meandering this way and that.  
Some jettisoned debris gathers  
on our shores. It can be hazardous.

Moments of strong current propel  
towards vast, dark pools. Once  
a wooden boat capsized.

We had laughed moments before,  
but came up spluttering desperate,  
hoping our skin could hold it all in.

Ted Gooda, UK

## Writing In a Flood

All the slight degrees of dark  
prove nothing's simple, like thoughts after  
zero was imagined. *Shadowhood and  
rain  
post-temporal seas*

You only enter the otherworld alone.

I look for water the way it was  
before it was ever seen, but this is more words

and it's getting late.  
Who said *grim currents  
of the riptide*

who said *undertow*  
A page is an opened light before the words  
darken it. If I say it out loud,  
I'm already under water.

Alexander Etheridge, US

## Path Like Water

I leave on a long Journey  
Following the path of water.

When water passes a forest and meets a boulder,  
It lightly detours to a side road.

The pool of water at the mountain's foot  
is so deep and clear  
That a passing goat wets its throat.

Water flows down to a lower place,  
Then forms rivers and creates seas.

Like wordless water,  
I flow to you.

Yoon-Ho Cho, US

## Water Lily on the Pond

It was like this.  
Skittery-legged water bugs,  
the squish of mud smell,  
swaying willow branches,  
silhouetted blacker than the night,  
rings on the lake rippling like promises  
made and broken.  
A gray carp, writhing on the moonlit dock,  
its gaping mouth useless in the air  
and her  
in the dark, stroking water.

Vivian McInerny, US



## Galapagos:

### Sea Turtle

On an island of bird calls and ever crashing surf,  
collected shatterments of whelk, starfish, conch,  
a shipwreck built upon the back of centuries of coral,  
green by accident of wind and promiscuous gull,  
I woke and walked.

My bare foot kicked up  
a curve of marble skull cup, smooth  
as any goddess' flesh under Praxiteles' hand,  
its soft parts worn away, its outer shell still gnarled  
and mottled like the sea.

How did it happen  
to this one? What day, what season, what sudden tide  
making toward this island flipped it backward  
against the sharp rocks of the headland, or forced it  
tight between two stones—its short limbs pawing  
wildly in the merciless air?

Or had its ancient slow metabolism ebbed,  
and the aged turtle crawled across the sand  
to where its mate last housed their egg,  
a delicate shell enclosing the next century's life,  
and there, as we will, not without pain, turned  
to give its thanks for life's fine high play  
which turtled over us and leaves  
love's strange, rich-vaulted shell  
to wash up on the shore and there be found  
by some early rising beachcomber, alone,  
in a misty foreign dawn, long after we have turned  
to water?

Gene Fendt, US

## H<sub>2</sub>O sound poem

(In 20 different languages)

Aguaaaaaaaaaa...  
Waaaaaaateeer...  
L'eeeeeeeeau...  
Vaaaaaaaaand...  
Akvoooooooooo...  
Vooooooooooda...  
Aaaaaaaacqua...  
Ma`.....`...  
JaIIIIIIII...  
AIIIIIIIIgua...  
Shhhhhhhhhui...  
Vettttttttä...  
Acquuuuuuuua...  
Vaaaaaaaaaatn...  
Mizuuuuuuuuu...  
Avvvvvvvvvv...  
Wassssssssser...  
Tannnnnnnnr...  
Vannnnnnnnn...  
BIIIIIIIIiyo...

Victor Valqui Vidal, Peru / Denmark

## Blubber, Fin and Tails

Remember when large creatures roamed the sea  
and oceans heaved with blubber, fin and tails;  
cast down your rod and live in harmony.

Preserve the sunfish, squid and manatee;  
protect the turtle with its shell and scales.  
Remember when large creatures roamed the sea

and harbour porpoises patrolled the quay.  
These days an ethos based on self prevails;  
cast down your rod and live in harmony.

Do not succumb to thoughts of apathy,  
like those who drift through Climate Crisis gales.  
Remember when large creatures roamed the sea

and coastal yarns were full of mystery.  
Shed tears for skeletons beneath your sails;  
cast down your rod and live in harmony.

The ocean is a part of you and me  
when we decide to sing the song of whales.  
Remember when large creatures roamed the sea;  
cast down your rod and live in harmony.

Caroline Gill, England

## Bread of Heaven

*(The 64 km long river Taff enters Cardiff at Taffs Well flowing south  
into Cardiff Bay)*

Snowdrops writhing / late daffodils peeking before / time a fervent pink  
/ peevish through lime-pine-oak-ash-hornbeam /

a March trying / to convince this land / is past wyverns / that some  
version of / pink is washed / off blood /

I am a sun-burnt / slap mottling Taff / which monster / threw me in  
when / in time present and time past /

a serpent mane / meanders as steam / climbs up a castle keep / red-  
white-green nurdling aloft / valley-lake-brae /

spring melanges as green / white is a layer of / terns swallowing a sea  
/ the end of a / beginning /

morning dew / lifting / chapel hush / chattering gossip / tween the crow  
and tigerworm / men-women-undefined / a rush / a glance / a dance /

driftwood stacked / off / February flood / lock in feet / plead / plot /  
connive every trick to / make ankles stick /

at noon I am still / a shadow / rat-tat-tat / silhouettes darken to / keep  
me contained / what came / before what / to submerge every ridge-  
fossil-hollow /

boulders cwtch / compelled to justify presence / cough / let the water /  
percolate cracks /

I let the sound stutter / let gurgles purify each bank / wobble each  
bridge /

does the quarry these / stones came from miss / the parts hacked /

is there a requiescat trembling / the grieving sitar / mourning this loss  
in / mass /

the sun dips past two / stones have / as much business / with the river  
/ as I /

neither may / claim / utility /

we mullion a sturdy back / to stand / an inch higher / quench a thirst /  
something to give back / a debt to repay /

where home / is / in the shower / I sequester dirt /

debtors hide / in the rings under my chin /

bubbles forage the / naval in search of a / songbird / lather a mist  
arching / my brow /

the let gone line to lick / the mends of / a hernia /

evening / falls / on the afternoon /

a procession retreats to / each corners of / the river like the cleanest  
laundered / sheets / pens sheathed / keyboards wiped clean of writs /  
perruques drizzled in / ale-prosecco-vino /

I chew / my own skin / tear up / the daily bread in / all its wheaten  
spelt / sometimes stale / flatten the pieces for / beaks to grasp / I keep  
the olives / to salinate my own cuts /

one day I / shall conjure / a typhoon / I shall colour in / a passant / red  
/ gather all the plastic / from storms gone / clattering the banks /

I shall stop / asking / where each carrier / came from /

what the river has / smeared them in / why a pigeon hatched in / the  
backyard asks me / to reveal / my palm each dawn /

I shall paint lips in saliva / slaughter all memory / flow / feed / be fed /

Taz Rahman, UK

### **At the edge of the bay**

*for Harriet*

We walk to the edge of the bay  
drawn, it seems, to this great dish  
where you played and swam  
and now, here, with your own baby  
strapped to you.

Could anything be stranger?  
the three of us beside the sea,  
the submerged beach where you played.  
a stone wall, the city in the distance

whatever next?

Warrick Wynne, Australia

## Fishing for Tiddlers

In a deep rock pool when you don't have a net,  
just your clumsy fingers so the tiny fishes slither  
and drop. The tide is on the turn  
and the pool refilled with treasures.  
Of course, there are pretty shells  
and you put them in your pocket  
but what you want is something *alive*  
and not just the pouting anemones,  
not just the stubborn barnacles,  
the lobster claw, the empty crab shell,  
all the smashed debris of the ocean.  
No, what you want is hiding in the shade  
of that rock. At first you don't see it  
though it watches you with eyes  
that glitter, wary of danger.  
And then something in the movement  
of your hand, perhaps, or just  
the patient, still waiting under the sun  
but there it is, a *flash* of gold,  
a swish of tail, a burrowing but you bring it  
out into the air in your cupped hands,  
gasping, and it is so beautiful, a gift,  
perfect, yours and, even as you let it go  
back into its element, back to  
that underwater world you'll never know,  
you stand, your feet in the waves,  
knowing you have held it in your hand.

Carole Bromley, UK

## Underneath

Syringes decorate the Usk  
High golden angels blankly bless  
True love abandoned foam swirled up  
Past metal piers hit moss kissed stone

Pont Neuf promises etched in rust  
Cry whispers of industrial pasts  
Steel girders greet tall cobalt tales  
Flout fabled lattice storms of lust

Great stories drip parched fountains wet  
Gush out to sea light sunset sky  
Consume pink drizzle draining waves  
Her tale a short black wick bled dry

Wet seagulls stare from silt stuck tyres  
Jagged tongues glint glass fake clouds collide  
Detectors find no treasure here  
Grey gurgling waters submerge lies

Alix Edwards, Wales



## Water

You always held hot water in two hands, as now,  
Protectively curled, as if  
For the warmth  
And the grace that still shines from your eyes.

One cool June, years ago, this was our sacrament,  
Like a tacit vow of love,  
And tea to be  
Always our comfort in life's aching turns.

Not for you just any tea, of course, particular lover!  
You smiled over fragrant copper-coloured  
Eastern jasmine scent,  
Studied the sunlight sweet glints at the bottom.

Confusion to me, loving the tarry black,  
Watching the marbling milk roiling in  
The tannic toughness,  
Softening to the colour of khaki sand.

But that water was a first communion,  
The chalice, the ordained comfort, then again and again,  
A Garibaldi the host,  
Our lives together the blessing.

Leslie Sheills, UK

## Llanrhystud

The woman who sits by the sea  
Has hands as curving and strong as the braids she pulls her grey hair  
into.  
She watches the water that inches ever closer, softly testing,  
The tide would wash her feet, and she would let it.  
The mighty sea and the mighty woman.  
The same ferocity and gentleness that sweeps you away  
In their quiet overwhelming pull.  
She has felt shipwrecks, lodged inside her rib cage, deep from  
memory.  
Before sleep she can hear them, groaning with the weight of life.  
For as a human would fall and fall into the depths of the sea,  
The sea would surely gasp for breath,  
If it tried to find the ends of the universe that lived within the woman.  
And as the salt blows against her cheeks, she silently sits and  
watches  
As the sea listens in reply.

Charlotte Whiting, Wales

## little duck

clinging to the shore of my shoulders  
in the council swimming pool  
shouting *bath! bath! bath!*  
with no other word for water  
thrashing her legs wildly  
*quack quack!* (yes, quack, quack!)  
giggling those perfect giggles  
primal instinct versus unmatched joy

last year I caught a cold on a seaside holiday  
a youthful urge to immerse myself  
In freezing northern shores  
I wish upon her the kind of friends  
who laugh those deep, painful laughs  
as you emerge from the salt  
like a man baptised  
watching you paw at your face  
and shake your unruly hair  
*woof woof!* (yes, woof woof!)

sister, who knows everything can be everything  
who crushes the garden flowers in her chubby fists  
keep making confetti out of petals  
make my hands into telephones  
always becoming something new  
i'll whisper into her play-doh cheeks  
saturn would float too  
if there was a *bath!* big enough to hold her

Estella Brown, UK

## THE POOL

Bodies of all ages  
and sizes  
clad in all colours of the rainbow  
find a place to rest,  
even if for a bit  
in this body of blue.

Adebisi Amori, 21, Nigeria

## Ability of Water

Haven't we all experienced nature's spirit  
A gentle splash to a blossom's leaf  
rather than the intensity of a hurricane's objection?

Would an artist be an artist  
without tones of a new-formed rainbow?  
Is Paris still called the "abode of love"  
without two lovers under the umbrella?  
Without it's rain pattering on the pavement?

Neptune's power, a blessing for us all  
the coffee that stains our lips in late night reading  
the relentless tossing of waves by the shore,  
peddles being skipped with ripples, shooting like stars

One of man's greatest gifts, nature's protection  
Yet we destroy it's home with our pollution  
So don't underestimate their favors granted,  
or it might just turn its back on you...

Regina Cordero, 12, Philippines

## **My anger is water**

My anger flows...  
Droplets turn into violent streams.  
Raging rapids grow from trickling brooks.  
Wanton waves shatter my pacific dreams.  
I cannot float away from hatred's hooks.

My anger falls...  
Whooshing waterfalls crash then stand still.  
A tedious tide in its ebb and flow  
Makes gentle breezes breathe a determined will  
For me to find peace and grow.

Thesan Moodley, South Africa

## **Ice Cubes**

Fleeting timer,  
steady sinking.  
And all the while,  
you talk at me.

Pursed lips,  
upon perched lip:  
Scarlett.  
Stainless.

Remark,  
"We're due a drink."

Declare,  
"We need to talk."

Yet I asked if you wanted ice in yours.

Now I contemplate every leisured diminishing.  
Cradled betwixt two,  
stiff hands.

Precipitation clouds further.

Though I didn't need look to see:  
Your glass,  
wholly optimistic,  
met mine,  
half-empty.

Great bergs to sudden, sorry puddles,  
neglected to inconsolable stagnation.

And there's no feasible way to tell that there was ever, remotely  
anything there to begin with.  
But a hole in my pocket,  
and a glassful of diluted lemonade.

Owen Davies, 21, UK



## Underwater

I only faintly remember what it feels like to be completely weightless  
To just let myself go underwater, and forget  
Not remembering that I was once afraid of the water beneath my feet  
The feeling persisting, life becoming an ominous silhouette

I know my hands are still there, clutching onto reality  
And my heart sits beneath it, just praying that it will slip through my fingers  
Craving blue to distract me from the feeling that I'm sinking  
Whilst the fear that I reject neverendingly lingers

I don't want to look back to the shore, and face  
The emotions deep within me screaming,  
Demanding to be felt  
So here I lie limply in the water,  
Giving weightlessness a new meaning

Ramona Sleight, 13, England

## It's Raining

said the galoshes to the wellies  
said Gene Kelly singing  
said the bolt to the lightning  
the clouds to the seeding  
said the umbrella to the tree  
the hail to the sleet  
said Gabriel Marquez beneath the sheets

it's coming down in buckets  
said the teacup to the tempest  
said nimbus to stratus  
the sprinkle to the cloudburst

Seth to Horus  
the jungle to the forest  
the tropics to the torrent

it's pouring said muddy to waters  
April to the showers  
pitter to patter  
said Indra to Wandjina  
Baal to Jupiter  
the tornado to the twister  
the city to the slicker  
said splash to splatter  
the storm to the chaser  
said clap to thunder  
the downpour to the drencher

I'm soaked to the bones  
said the plains to Spain  
said the blizzard to the drizzle  
the drops to the puddle  
the hurricane to the typhoon  
the cyclone to the monsoon  
said water to the fall  
the deluge to the squall  
said Zeus to Thor  
the cats to the dogs  
the coyote to the Navajo  
the ark to Noah

rain rain away you go  
said Iris to Isis  
as they brought out their palettes  
and painted the rainbow

Helen Bar-Lev, Israel

## Plastic Water Bottles

my enemy in North America, the enemy  
of my gastrointestinal enemy in Asia.  
the clear  
clutching fingers  
of capitalism's invisible hand,  
that force I thought mythical, or propaganda,  
until thirsty at any temple or beach

the transparent  
black magic and tragic  
millennial turn, my hollow,  
crackling confessions. the most defining  
sculpture of the species. cheap  
but lasting. lasting  
and cheap. inflated  
avatar of self-interest

crime-scene hotel rooms littered  
with the spent shell casings of my empties.  
small tracer bullets and larger five-nines  
dropped behind

I am become ocean Death  
the destroyer  
of marine worlds

Professor Darryl Whetter, US

## Pluviophile

How can they call it a dull day,  
when the sky wears so many moods?

The gathering before fall,  
Hushed clouds, intake of breath  
Before fury's electric steel,

Dull chill grinds bones,  
Soft soak, a twist of earth and root  
Encompassing mist, mizzled trees,  
Searing strength of drenching downpour,  
Dew-spill of diamante dawns,

Hurled together  
in the shared hub  
of your umbrella,  
Everything scintillates  
and sparkles.

Rebecca Lowe, Wales



## Old bits of cloud

My pockets are full of old bits of cloud,  
crumpled, grey and too weary to rise.  
Wisps of cirrus, handfuls of altocumulus  
mingle with my keys and scraps of paper.  
Stale fog seeps from my winter coat.  
Ragged chunks of nimbostratus ruin the shape of my suit.  
Slithers of mist and haze lie forgotten in inside pockets.  
Sometimes I find a piece of foreign cloud picked up on holiday.  
In my grandfather's old jacket I found a bank of cumulonimbus from  
1975.  
If I put them through the laundry they disintegrate  
leaving each garment streaked with contrails  
battered fragments clinging lifeless to the fabric,  
the last drop of rain rinsed out of them.

Patrick Widdes, UK



## Cock Beck Diptych

### 1: *Defixiones*

The beck bends sharply, forms  
a black iris of a pond, so profound,  
so still, you would think it stared right  
through you. Others have stood here;  
out of blind need, pooled their prayers,  
wheedled for succour from indifferent  
spirits, scribed demands onto lead tablets,  
pitched them into a ritual of unmoved  
water in hope of justice. Those gods are spent;  
new curses leach in with barbarous words  
even a demon might never fathom:  
phosphate, sediment, pesticide, nitrate...  
The stream is disturbed, can't see straight,  
won't be soothed until fish run to spawn  
a future on its breeding beds, it is resurrected.

### 2: *The Memory of Water*

The beck contains all it has ever been;  
from Whinmoor to Wharfe it recalls itself  
confused, run red with muddy blood -  
the bridge bodies of Winwaed, Towton,  
the yellow birds of Barnbow – then cleared,  
all spotless, all consecrated in the purifying flow.  
We can be sanguine now. In the shadow  
of the bridge, the water shapes a lustral  
basin, into which we step like catechumens.  
Kick-sampling, we chant invertebrates as liturgy:  
caddis, may, damsel...caddis, may, damsel.  
All is getting better; the beck is incarnate.  
Trout hang over gravel, salmon librate, gazing  
upstream, and in the water's remembering,  
Cock Beck sings gently of itself, lucid, silver tongued.

Patrick Lodge, UK

## A WALK ALONG NEATH CANAL

I search for  
Poetic inspiration  
but find only  
swaying reeds  
and still water.  
Then in a shaft  
of sunlight  
fire and water  
become one  
simmering in  
autumn glory.  
A path of dreams  
and sunken hopes  
lost in a world  
turned upside down.  
Then the clouds  
move once more  
and all is dark  
and absolutely  
unfathomable  
again.

Phil Knight, Wales



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