

Sea Love

Tide be runnin' the great world over:
'Twas only last June month I mind that we
Was thinkin' the toss and the call in the breast of the lover
So everlastin' as the sea.

Here's the same little fishes that sputter and swim,
Wi' the moon's old glim on the grey, wet sand;
An' him no more to me nor me to him
Than the wind goin' over my hand.

—Charlotte Mew

My Life by Water

My life
by water—
Hear

spring's
first frog
or board

out on the cold
ground
giving

Muskrats
gnawing
doors

to wild green
arts and letters
Rabbits

raided
my lettuce
One boat

two—
pointed toward
my shore

thru birdstart
wingdrip
weed-drift

of the soft
and serious—
Water

—Lorine Neidecker

Well Water

What a girl called “the dailiness of life”
(Adding an errand to your errand. Saying,
“Since you’re up . . .” Making you a means to
A means to a means to) is well water
Pumped from an old well at the bottom of the world.
The pump you pump the water from is rusty
And hard to move and absurd, a squirrel-wheel
A sick squirrel turns slowly, through the sunny
Inexorable hours. And yet sometimes
The wheel turns of its own weight, the rusty
Pump pumps over your sweating face the clear
Water, cold, so cold! you cup your hands
And gulp from them the dailiness of life.

—Randall Jarrell

Water

If I were called in
To construct a religion
I should make use of water.

Going to church
Would entail a fording
To dry, different clothes;

My liturgy would employ
Images of sousing,
A furious devout drench,

And I should raise in the east
A glass of water
Where any-angled light
Would congregate endlessly.

—Philip Larkin

Water Wheel

I sat with slivers of foxtails in each sock
And a stick that stirred rain water,
Gush of a cloud that passed over our house.
I was five, and it was five in the afternoon,
Spring I guess. The mailman had come and gone
On his bicycle, his pants gnashed in the oily chain,
His creased face a river of rain water.
The diesels had stopped. The whistle at Sun-Maid Raisin
Had cleared the air. Men the color of sparrows
Had walked home, Father among them, all tired
And swinging their lunch pails like lanterns.
I was coming alive. Sure, I was cold,
And my shoes were curled. Sure, my hair was wet
And I was beginning to shiver. But I was waiting
For Arnold, a boy up the alley. He promised
Me the Chinese garden in a clam shell—
Water wheel, bridge, and a woman with a fan,
Beauty on a street stomped all night by machinery.
I waited with rain on my eyelashes.
Fortune was mine. After all, didn't I race my bicycle
Under a moving diesel? Didn't I push myself
Hand over fist on the telephone wire?
I waited for the Chinese garden
And its water wheel to turn in the long life of rain.

—Gary Soto

A Drink of Water

She came every morning to draw water
Like an old bat staggering up the field:
The pump's whooping cough, the bucket's clatter
And slow diminuendo as it filled,
Announced her. I recall
Her grey apron, the pocked white enamel
Of the brimming bucket, and the treble
Creak of her voice like the pump's handle.
Nights when a full moon lifted past her gable
It fell back through her window and would lie
Into the water set out on the table.
Where I have dipped to drink again, to be
Faithful to the admonishment on her cup,
Remember the Giver, fading off the lip.

—Seamus Heaney

A Short Story of Falling

It is the story of the falling rain
to turn into a leaf and fall again

it is the secret of a summer shower
to steal the light and hide it in a flower

and every flower a tiny tributary
that from the ground flows green and momentary

is one of water's wishes and this tale
hangs in a seed-head smaller than my thumbnail

if only I a passerby could pass
as clear as water through a plume of grass

to find the sunlight hidden at the tip
turning to seed a kind of lifting rain drip

then I might know like water how to balance
the weight of hope against the light of patience

water which is so raw so earthy-strong
and lurks in cast-iron tanks and leaks along

drawn under gravity towards my tongue
to cool and fill the pipe-work of this song

which is the story of the falling rain
that rises to the light and falls again

—Alice Oswald