

National Poetry Day in Scotland

3 October 2013

WATER

Think of a flood

Think of a flood, think of a well
Working, working, think of a mill.

Think of your blood, moving, moving
Through every artery of night and morning

Think how the grass, trees and plants know
They need the cloud-bursts of rain to grow

Think of yourself out in the mud and the mire
Think what cleans your hands, feet, hair.

Think of mammy making your dinner
Without water boiling in the pan for her

Think of water that comes from air,
How it came from there and goes, where?

Think of medicine when we are ill
How much water we need to get well

Think of a hot bath or a shower
The splash-splash pleasure, the hot vapours.

So many other things we may need water for.
Make your own list for your son or your daughter.

Jackie Kay
from the Gaelic of Maoilios Caimbeul

Rain

I love all films that start with rain:
rain, braiding a windowpane
or darkening a hung-out dress
or streaming down her upturned face;

one big thundering downpour
right through the empty script and score
before the act, before the blame,
before the lens pulls through the frame

to where the woman sits alone
beside a silent telephone
or the dress lies ruined on the grass
or the girl walks off the overpass,

and all things flow out from that source
along their fatal watercourse.
However bad or overlong
such a film can do no wrong,

so when his native twang shows through
or when the boom dips into view
or when her speech starts to betray
its adaptation from the play,

I think to when we opened cold
on a starlit gutter, running gold
with the neon of a drugstore sign
and I'd read into its blazing line:

*forget the ink, the milk, the blood –
all was washed clean with the flood –
we rose up from the falling waters
the fallen rain's own sons and daughters
and none of this, none of this matters.*

Don Paterson

What Is The Pond Doing?

(for Ruairidh, who asked)

Wobbling like a wobbly jelly
Being a bucket for the rain
Sending flash-backs to the sun
Cheeking the sky
Giving the moon a bath
Letting swans, ducks and winter leaves ride on its back
Licking the lollipop reeds
Pretending to be soup for the wind to stir
Growing stinky skunk cabbages
Drawing wheels and circles then rubbing them out
Plopping slopping slurping spinning
Turning the weeping willows happily upside down
Dreaming of running away to sea
Hiding under a starry blanket of dark

What is the pond doing?
Ponding. Responding.

Diana Hendry

Rudan a nì uisge

Smaoinich air tuil, smaoinich air tobar,
smaoinich air muileann, 's i 'g obair 's ag obair;
smaoinich air d' fhuil 's i falbh 's a' falbh
trod chuislean uile a dh'oidhche 's a là;
smaoinich air craobhan 's feur 's air lusan,
chan fhàsadh iad idir gun frasain is fhuichead;
smaoinich ort fhèin a-muigh anns a' pholl –
dè ghlanas an salchar aig a' cheann thall?
Smaoinich air mamaidh a' dèanamh do dhinneir,
gun uisge sa phana cha bhruicheadh nì dhi;
smaoinich air uisge a thig às an adhar,
cò às tha e tighinn agus càit am falbh e?
Smaoinich air cungadh nuair bhios sinn tinn,
cò ann a leaghas na mathasan grinn?
Smaoinich air frasair no bath mòr teth,
le splis is le splais is deatach tighinn dheth.
'S tha ceud rud eile a nì sinn le uisge,
nach smaoinich thu orra is tòisich air liosta.
Maoilios Caimbeul

coire fhionn lochan

lapping of the little waves
breaking of the little waves
spreading of the little waves
idling of the little waves

rippling of the little waves
settling of the little waves
meeting of the little waves
swelling of the little waves

trembling of the little waves
dancing of the little waves
pausing of the little waves
slanting of the little waves

tossing of the little waves
scribbling of the little waves
lilting of the little waves
sparkling of the little waves

leaping of the little waves
drifting of the little waves
running of the little waves
splashing of the little waves

Thomas A. Clark

The Whale-watcher

And when at last the road
gives out, I'll walk –
harsh grass, sea-maws,
lichen-crusted bedrock –

and hole up the cold
summer in some battered
caravan, quartering
the brittle waves

till my eyes evaporate
and I'm willing again
to deal myself in:
having watched them

breach, breathe, and dive
far out in the glare,
like stitches sewn in a rent
almost beyond repair.

Kathleen Jamie

The Travel Guide to the Country of Your Birth

which
has over 300 natural lakes
is one of the oldest countries in Europe
has something for everyone, in every season
occupies the north-east part of the Balkan Peninsula
sits on the Black Sea to the East and the Danube to the North
offers white-sand beaches, mystic mountains, and ancient towns
has the Balkan range, which is part of the Alpine-Himalayan chain
has 378 kilometres of Black Sea coast. The Black Sea is closed and non-tidal, and has 90% anoxic water
has a moderate continental climate: winters (November to February)
are cold and dry, temperatures reach -10
is the place where in dark, empty apartments the people you love
live inside mirrors

Kapka Kassabova

from 'Seeker, Reaper'

She's Cast off! Anchor up! deid anchor-weary,
she's a chain-snubber, moorin'-strainer, restless herbour peerie.
She's a skyline-raiser, skyline-sinker, hull-down horizon-croser,
she's foreland, foreland, on and on, a high-heid-tosser.
She's a glint, she's a glimmer, she's a glimpse, she's a fletcher,
she's an overhauler, leave-aster, a hale-fleet-beater;
she's a kyle-coulter, knot-reeler, thrang-speed-spinner,
her mood is moulded on her and the mind that made her 's in her.
She's a wake-plough, foam-plough, spray-hammer, roarer,
she's a wind-anvil, crest-batterer, deep-trough-soarer,
she's a dance-step-turner, she's a broad-wake-scorer,
she's a sound-threider, bight-stringer, her hert runs oot afore her.
When the big long seas come on lik walls, cold-white-heided,
she doesna flinch a point for them. Straight her wake is threided.

George Campbell Hay

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By leaves we live

