

## *The drowned world*

Fountains work hard to be joyous for us. Look how they  
keep their mouths open.  
You want to put your hand in this water, you want to  
lean over it, stir it,  
graze your fingertips along the sides of the ancient fish  
who own it.  
Public baths might be ruined, tiles lifted, but the sound  
of water endures.  
In summer we hope for rain to clear the lanes of the  
smell of urine.  
In summer we remember how winter rain transformed  
the city into roofs, gutters.  
There is something unstable in water, a life under  
ground then this spilling of light.  
The surface of the mind is permeable under the swirling  
suggestion of water.  
If fountains are only truly happy in summer, why do we  
leave them out in winter?  
There is something ridiculous about water, its mindless  
falling and welling.  
Water brings our lips to its sounds, brings the wings of  
birds to its brittle surface.  
Fish fly through it, lilies live upon it, light falls on it,  
shade deepens in it.  
She was drowning, her face was upturned. Someone  
lifted her clear of the water.  
Water laughs at itself, it must, it has no other speech  
but this spilled laughter.  
We hurry out of the rain into a church where we dip  
fingertips into a bowl of water.  
Those nymphs and naiads, fauns and gods, they act as if  
water is a form of wine.  
Water bursts from rock or from a mouth or out of a  
shell, always tumbling down:  
This circus of water, this rope of water, this water  
pooling in its sleep.  
Dolphins and turtles fall from the laps of Neptunes in  
my photographs.  
In water gravity weakens its hold on our shoulders  
and arms.  
My first thought is to swim across it. The water invites  
me in to its liquid mind.  
By the time the river arrives in the city it is as wise and  
vermin-ridden as a beard.  
The water in which she'd been drowning sealed over  
instantly.  
I stand up from the water as if shaped by the water,  
arms out, as if adrift.  
By the time the river arrives at the sea its stories are an  
exhausted murmur.  
In summer we hope for rain to send us back inside  
ourselves again.

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