

Water Ways

Joan Van Poznak

It's not the drinking water I'll miss,
The hard stuff from our 1929 lead pipes
Supplied by Thames Water.

It's the Thames itself,
Ebbing and flowing outside my window
For the past forty years.

Magical hydrotherapy,
As I have watched its comings and goings
From my kitchen window seat.
Looking over the rose garden,
Beyond the swath of lawn,
The York paving stone path, the Hawthorne hedge,
The roof of the little rustic hut,
To the River.

A modest boat or two
Anchored within view.
Swans idling elegantly,
Ducks dipping or letting the tide
Lazily carry them with the flow.

A tourist boat may pass,
More frequently in Spring or Summer,
Or a party boat on Saturday nights
Thrumming with music.
And I keep an eye out for the Thames Bubbler,
An impressive blue and white affair,
Moving along at a purposeful clip
As it oxygenates the River so that
The first salmon in a century
Has been caught upstream.

I see over the wall of our Secret Garden,
The espalier fig tree has thrived too well,
And its leaves now block some of my view
Across the River to the park,
Sunday cricket matches on the lawn,
Families at play, a pair of police stroll on horseback.
And I watch the changing light, sunsets,
Reflections on the water,
No two the same.

Then there's my bathtub, as old as I am
Original when Rivermead Court was built,
Deep and long and the water comes
Hot and furiously fast.
A few drops of rose geranium oil
In the steaming water, ease slowly in,
And stretch out full length, free floating,
My head cradled in the now obsolete bath pillow.
Which of us will go first?
The tensions vanish.
I am nowhere.

Showers are for the New World,
With our dynamic view
Of the busy waterway,
The super yachts that
Bring out my socialist instincts
As I look the other way at
Black children playing in the park.

This view was a perfect contrast
As long as I knew I had the other
Quiet life to balance it.
Privileged for so long.
So long...
Now I must make peace
Within myself.
Goodbye, London,
The Snow Bird has landed.