

Tidepools 2001: Water

Think: can you name anything it isn't? The better part of blood, melons, ink; three signs of the zodiac; scaffold for lilies and kelp; medium for salt, seeds, Jello, bottled letters and cholera. The swan's way-and also the class 10 that flips your boat like a Maryland quarter, the northwest passage that doesn't, the unfordable fjord. It is complicit in all things; it drifts through the chambers of our hearts, beads a spiderweb in the gray hours before dawn, lobs rocks through bay windows along the Pacific Coast Highway, inspires the most fevered of our dreams.

** SWM, 35, seeks SF 18-22 for long walks on the beach.**

** A hard rain's gonna fall.**

** For destruction ice/Is also great/And would suffice.**

** And God said to Noah, "I have determined to make an end of all flesh."**

Southern California doesn't have much of its own, and this leads to some peculiar covenants. If you grow cotton you pay thirty-four cents an acre-foot; if you fill your jacuzzi, a dollar. (If you fill it with Evian, it's \$1,209.20.) It's possible to feel guilty for aiding and abetting a lawn or loitering in the shower, but keeping your car clean falls under 'freedom of religion' in the state constitution and every developer has a golf course on his breath. We also seem determined to make an end of all flesh, or at least of every kind that depends on the aquifers underlying our green dreamscape. Unlike God, though, it looks like we might do it by draining.

But perhaps all rivers do flow to the sea and all seas are taken up by the wind. And perhaps-if we are careful, or lucky, or blessed-the wind will carry our blood back to us, and let us start again.

** And the dove came back to them in the evening, and lo, in her mouth a freshly-plucked olive leaf.**

Jane Mushinsky
September '00