

**Words on Water – 2020**  
*Poetry – “Night Waves”*

By Nicholas Walsh

Giant black pupils  
And bloodshot whites.  
Wide and massive eyes  
That are helplessly blind.  
The light pulsates harshly  
In rhythm with my heart;  
Red and blue,  
Hot and cold blood.  
There is laughing and singing,  
Screaming and crying,  
Ringing together in a metallic medley  
Of excruciatingly loud silence.  
I jump and flail, trying to keep up.  
My thrashing, deadened limbs swing heavily  
As scalding hot water flows  
From my excited pores.

I am surrounded by bodies,  
A robotic myriad of boundless joy,  
Just longing for escape.  
This is life at its fullest.  
I am floating through a sea of people,  
And have never felt so alone.  
I know I cannot just leave my friends,  
But this massive room is so full of life,  
It seems I might yet slip out unnoticed.

The door closes behind me,  
And I exhale desperate silent relief,  
Breathing it out of me like an unpleasant smell.  
No one will notice my absence,  
I may yet spare them pain.  
I drop my shoes into the tall grass,  
And sink my toes into the beautifully cold sand.  
The cool, salty air flows down into my lungs  
And into my heart.  
I close my eyes and listen to the night,  
Which is almost silent,  
Except for the smallest sounds of life.  
I feel grounded, and whole.  
I am home.

Now the frothy waves are swelling over my feet,  
Playfully nipping at my ankles.  
Then the water rises past my knees,  
Slowing my steadfast pace,  
Shockingly cold at first, but  
Then it's not so bad after all.

I let the water pass over my waist,  
And now my shoulders;  
A cool relief to my parched and burning flesh.  
I cup my hands and bring a small pool up to my face  
In the hope of an earnest cleanse.  
My ravenous soul drinks it in,  
And my fears drip down into the sea  
To be consumed by a million plankton.  
My feet have left the sand,  
And I move into the water,  
As my ancestor once moved out of it,  
Some unknowable night long ago.  
I turn onto my back,  
Floating like a sodden cork.  
My eyes are full of shining stars,  
Which are now beginning to blur at the edges.