

OF SEA

Elizabeth-Jane Burnett is an author, academic and founder of *Grow Your Own Creativity*. A writer of English and Kenyan heritage, she was born in Devon and her work is inspired by the landscape in which she was raised. Her poetry has been highly commended in the Forward Prize and *Swims* was longlisted for the Laurel Prize and a Sunday Times Poetry Book of the Year. She was selected for the 2020 British Council/National Centre for Writing International Literature Showcase and leads the British Academy/Leverhulme Trust project, *Creative Writing and Climate Change: Moss, Wetlands and Women* (2018-20).

ALSO BY ELIZABETH-JANE BURNETT

POETRY

Swims (Penned in the Margins, 2017)

CRITICAL

A Social Biography of Contemporary Innovative Poetry Communities: The Gift, the Wager and Poethics (Palgrave, 2017)

NON-FICTION

The Grassling (Allen Lane, 2019)

Of Sea

ELIZABETH-JANE BURNETT

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NOTE ON THE TEXT

A recent survey for a site at Dawlish Warren in Devon shows the presence of 39 invertebrates. The poems chart encounters through swimming.

Of Sea

SUN

Prickly Cockle

A sunrise in a shell.
How you start light,
then take flight down
your own body, shedding
fire. I happen upon you
as daylight, dizzy with
waking, all efforts
of not breaking exposed,
glazed open. I would
no more touch than break
you. I would no more break
than touch you. A hair,
a line is all it takes.

Great Green Bush Cricket

All a-glow
the green a-gleam
a-glass a-gasp
a-grasp the grassy sea.
Dip up the freshly

of a crackle a-field.
a wing that sings
a-clatter a-chatter
the branch of wave
cut water lie low

Barrel Jellyfish

‘The [US] administration has taken a hatchet to climate change language across government websites ... mentions of climate change have been excised, buried or stripped of any importance’

The Guardian, 14th May, 2017

To be a risky thing, run in water thing, early riser.

As a robin, as a jaybird, as an eye. We put our parts together. We outward

form. We resemble. As rusks, as plants grow in marshy ground, as wind. We be longing to peril, in press of pressing on. If we disappear

try us with different titles.

Say we were frost or fruit. Say we were whale fat. Say we were good for the economy, or don't say anything.

Plait a rope, thread a hundred of our mouths together, let
only sea unravel us.

Look for us, even after we are gone. With eight arms
there's a chance one may keep, wrongly filed under

weapons.

White-tailed Bumble Bee

go		go
just	go	just
pack	just	pack
flowers	pack	flowers
	flowers	

		go
go		just
just	go	pack
pack	just	flowers
flowers	pack	
	flowers	

go
just go
pack just go
flowers pack just
flowers flowers pack
 flowers

do you ever go
to sea just pack
up & leave all flowers
at the shore?

go go go go
just just just just
pack pack pack pack
flowersflowersflowersflowers

Small Blue

for Olly Watts

‘The S-shaped butterfly banks ... were primarily designed to spread the range of the small blue butterfly ... To do this we have planted or sown seed of the butterfly caterpillar food plants that thrive on thin chalk soils’

— Patrick Cashman, RSPB, 2018

		small blue	small blue	
	small blue	small blue	small blue	small blue
small blue	small blue	small blue	small blue	small blue
dark green fritillary				
dark green fritillary				
common blue				
marbled white				
marsh fritillary				
	Devil's-bit scabious			
	horseshoe vetch	horseshoe vetch		
		squinancywort	squinancywort	
		mouse-ear hawkweed	mouse-ear hawkweed	
			wild thyme	wild thyme
			carline thistle	
			rockrose	rockrose
			carline thistle	carline
		violet	hairy violet	hairy
	hairy violet	hairy violet	hairy violet	
kidney vetch	kidney vetch	kidney vetch	kidney vetch	
kidney vetch	kidney vetch	kidney vetch	kidney	
kidney vetch	kidney vetch			

Squat Furrow Bee

Between a basket, a gland,
an abdomen, a hive,
a neck, a belly,
a barrier, a square,
a muscle, a hollow, a shell
pulls between us, bearing
legs, bearing wings,
a spinning causeway of wicker work.