

Water Bodies: Love Letters to the Most Abundant Substance on Earth

Laura Paskus, Editor

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Water Bodies, edited by reporter Laura Paskus, is a mixed-genre anthology that serves as a paean to bodies of water.

"In this climate-changed world," the introduction intones, "we live in an ever-tightening present." It's a warning that hangs over the essays and poems, which focus on what different bodies of water mean. They are places of immense life, sanctuaries, and fierce forces of nature. Herein, though, each cool jump into the lake carries a reminder that the water used to be deeper.

Focused on the waterways of the American West, the essays jump between a dam in New Mexico, the Blackfoot River, and a dive from a cliff into a Wyoming lake. The water bodies in these entries are described in vibrant, grace-filled detail, as in Daniel Rothberg's "Lightweight," an ode to the Truckee River and the ecosystems it serves, and Kate Schimel's "What We Talk About When We Talk About Water," which asks whether water can be defined at all. And Sarah Gilman's standout poem "Surfacing" is entrancing, its visuals revealing how universal water is, including in the human body: "when I catch those snowflakes in my mouth, their melt water makes my throat a subterranean creek, feeds countless tributaries, fans through every delta in my flesh." The book does not dwell on the long-term effects of climate change but still leaves impressions of dwindling rivers and drying lake beds. Beyond their functions as resources, it implies, these waters are also dying because of a lack of human memory and imagination.

A reminder of how personal bodies of water are to those who inhabit and remember them, *Water Bodies* is a breathtaking and heartbreaking anthology focused on defining features of the American West.

CHLOE CLARK (September / October 2024)

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