

*In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God and the Word was
God . . . and the Word became flesh.
[And thereafter all words became metaphors]*

In writing his masterpiece *Ulysses* the Irish writer James Joyce (1882-1941) - unlike most writers - broke out of the mold of a single narrative style and sometimes wrote in the styles of writers of different periods of English literature. Being of Catholic upbringing, he also wrote a chapter in the "question and answer" style of the catechism. You know: *Who made us? Who is God? Why did God make us? . . .*

He uses this style when he writes about the moment when the young frustrated artist Stephen is somehow lifted out of his mood by the older Leopold Bloom – who offers Stephen a cup of cocoa. It's nighttime and the scene goes thus: *What did Bloom do at the range? And the answer is: He removed the saucepan to the left hob, rose and carried the iron kettle to the sink in order to tap the current by turning the faucet to let it flow.*

And then: *Did it flow? Yes. From Roundwood reservoir of a cubic capacity of 2,400 million gallons, percolating through a subterranean aqueduct of filter mains of single and double pipeage constructed at . . .the cost of £5 per linear yard by way of the Dargle, Rathdown, . . . and Callowhill to the 26 acre reservoir at Stillorgan, a distance of 22 statute miles, and thence, through a system of relieving tanks, . . . until it issued from the faucet. And then comes the question: What in water did Bloom, returning to the range, admire?*

And there follows such a flow of qualities about water in its so many shapes and dynamics: *Its universality: . . . its unplumbed profundity in the Sundam trench . . . its hydrostatic quiescence in calm: its hydrokinetic turgidity in neap and spring tides: . . . , its capacity to dissolve and hold in solution all soluble substances including billions of tons of the most precious metals: its slow erosions of peninsulas , , , its vehicular ramifications in streams and confluent . . . rivers . . . and transoceanic currents . . . its violence in seaquakes, waterspouts, . . . torrents, eddies, . . . groundswells, watersheds, . . . geysers, cataracts, whirlpools, . . . inundations, deluges, cloudbursts; . . . the simplicity of its composition, . . . its healing virtues: its buoyancy in the waters of the Dead Sea: . . . its properties for cleansing, quenching thirst and fire, nourishing vegetation: . . . its metamorphoses as vapour, mist, cloud, rain, sleet, snow, hail: . . . its solidity in glaciers, icebergs: its docility in working hydraulic millwheels, turbines, dynamos, . . . its submarine fauna and flora . . . its ubiquity as constituting 90% of the human body: the noxiousness . . . of stagnant pools in the waning moon.*

H₂O yes – but water as describable in so many ways to serve as metaphors that mirror so much about ourselves, of how we are, so potent and yet so gentle, so fluid and yet so often frozen in place, so often shallow yet so deep we cannot fathom ourselves. Metaphors of you – you yourself a reservoir of wisdom, insight, caring – of such distant origin and yet so close you only have to turn the tap to let it flow.

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