

Three Poems from *Words the Turtle Taught Me*

Susan Richardson
Writer, United Kingdom
susan@susanrichardsonwriter.co.uk

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.37536/ECOZONA.2026.17.1.5826>



Stench *Galeorhinus galeus*

Imagine smelling more
than that drop of blood
 in the water
 a quarter of a mile away;
more than location, source,
and readiness for sex or eating.
Imagine smelling dolphins' one-eyed sleep,
seastars' tube feet,
the hubris of scuba.
Imagine two nasal tracts,
 undistracted by breathing.
Imagine smelling the creeping acidity of sea,
 tiny shelled terrors,
chemical errors in the bloodcells
of dab and pouting.
Imagine reading those smells
that are long out of print –
the origin of salt,
 oxygen's historic drift,
 misspellings
of sinks
 of carbon.
Imagine smelling that urge
 to purge an estuary
of its role as a long-term nursery;
her internal stilted hatch of eggs,
the silted stench
 of her last
 birthing.

Play
Lamna nasus

love being on the cusp of tooth
love quickswim and squidding
love egging little finness —
thousand egging

love best when frondling kelp
the overunder underover roll and oh
the gilly tingle
not just skinridding not just snailful
but wrap and tangle tag and tug
all feely with it
love sillying the timbers
love snouting the floaters till they pop

better than sexbite
better than flitting whiffs of sleep
and better than their onesome funning —
the rippy throat the longlongstrung
then gutgash when they fin we out
in thrash of unsea above

Eye
Hippoglossus hippoglossus

sided-lop shift
optical drift
cross-skull nonplussing

fresh angle of crab
snatched curve of shrimp
squinter than simple switch
of gaze astraying
to full eye-dentity change

now wowing
at the right-above
the two-times cod
the double sculpin
as I-socket halts
and ossifies

then itch of scales on the I-less side
a twitch down the unpatterned lateral line
at the think of what eye might
be missing

eye still remember
the upright swim
the lower jaw of the trawl net
that terroring

though caudal fin flicks
with its northing frame of mind
the greatest migration begins
with the riddle of assymetry
ends with a sinistral sense
that gravel and sand
are also blind

These poems were first published in *Words the Turtle Taught Me* (Cinnamon Press, 2018) and are reprinted here with permission.