**Ebb Tide, Morecambe Bay** *by M. Valentine Williams*

Hest Bank.

The cocklepickers dig

out in the estuary,

apron of the cold, lap-slapping sea.

Razor clams lick tongues with cockles,

sinking in glutinous unwashed mud.

Covered in shell shucks,

lugworm spew their coils.

Here samphire holds the memory of land

on runnels oozing the dredge;

dry stickdrift sheaf piles scattered

on the tide’s edge.      Motion suddenly,

the tide turns,

tumbles all around itself, filling in the flats.

Elephant grey; sand creases and folds,

crater pale,

topples. Pewter-puddled sea ribs

ripple.

Steps shake unsteady ground,

(quicksand of no turning back, not now, not ever.)

The siren sounds.

Caught in the sucking sinkhole of the sea

eighteen were lost,

sandmouthed and lead-full of water

as they waited, going down

for help to come

to the teenaged boys from Zelong Village

who will never go back home