

## **Chalk, with Flints**

*Somewhere in the unconscious the echoed consonants ...*  
– Don Paterson

Chock-full of coccoliths under the microscope:  
a basket of cartwheels, corpuscles, Coke-bottle caps;  
a shingle of cameos. Think of phytoplankton  
discarding their skeletons in a warm shelf sea,  
quietly as snow, how carbon dioxide spikes  
at an absolute high and water doesn't ice at the poles.  
A cliff – or a cutting – holds a lifetime of fossils.  
Look at its rhythmic packages of sediment.  
Track its tectonic upheavals into anticline:  
church, ark, *structure*. Encounter it at Ventnor  
or Eastbourne or in the Aghrimderg borehole.  
Study the blocks of its consonants, its breathy vowel.  
Watch dark fricatives spark in the lyric ground.

Emma Must