

RIVER LINES

A river
runs through this poem.

River images
are piling up.

Cauldrons
of worn rock.
Drowned landslips.
Stationary waves
swaying as they stay put.

The river swerves against the slopes
of the poem.
River distances
appear out of nowhere.
Mountains,
a narrow sky.

Then cliffs
and dark pools.
Undercurrents and eddies.

The river has settled in.

But the poem is beginning to wonder
about the river.

The way it mutters to itself.

Its inescapable weight.

Its endless
arrival.

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There was too much river in the poem.

Reading it
was wall to wall river.

There was no way out
of the poem's flooded ravines,
no way of telling
poem from river.
Words whispering
as they swept around a bend,
all that print
moving on to downstream meanings.

The river overflowed the poem
and escaped.

For a while
there were hints of river.
The occasional gleaming line,
a river word or two
glinting in the distance.

Now the poem
has no river in it.
It doesn't know where the river is.
It remembers the river
and talks about it.

Although it knows better
the poem wants to be the river.

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The river has gone.

The poem is all sky
and mountain.

It needs the river to be rewritten.

But the river will not return.
It's free
to be pursued
by thoughts that have never occurred to anyone.
It has shaken off
the known mind.

It flows
somewhere on the other side of everything.

It's searching
for new mountains.
A sky.

It remains
the unwritten river.

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The river lives
on the other side of everything.
Beyond the reach of the poem.

The poem thinks of the river
as a shining rope.
The river
ties a mountain
to the earth.
Sky is tethered to the top of the mountain
by a slipstream
of cloud.

The poem admits
it is making this up.

It wants to fill
the river void.

But the hidden river insists.
It has found unimaginable mountains.
Unwritable sky.

It wants
the impossible poem.