

# THE FORTNIGHTLY REVIEW.

(WITH CHRONICLE AND NOTICES)

THE NEW  FORTNIGHTLY REVIEW.CO.UK  SERIES.

'THE STROKE OF AN OAR GIVEN IN TRUE TIME'

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## from *Teint*.

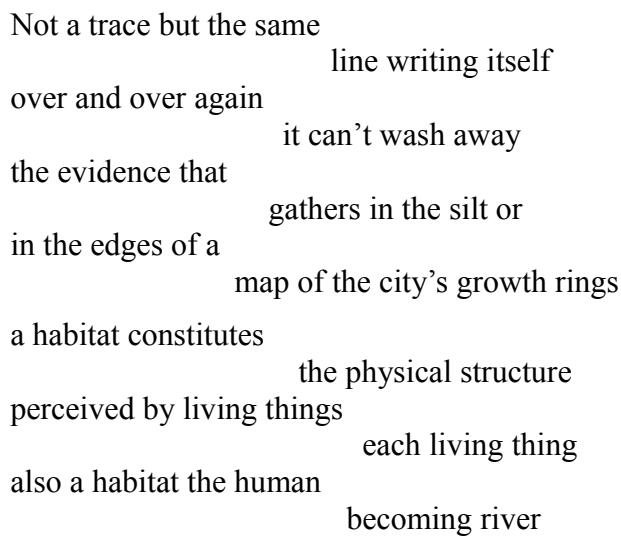
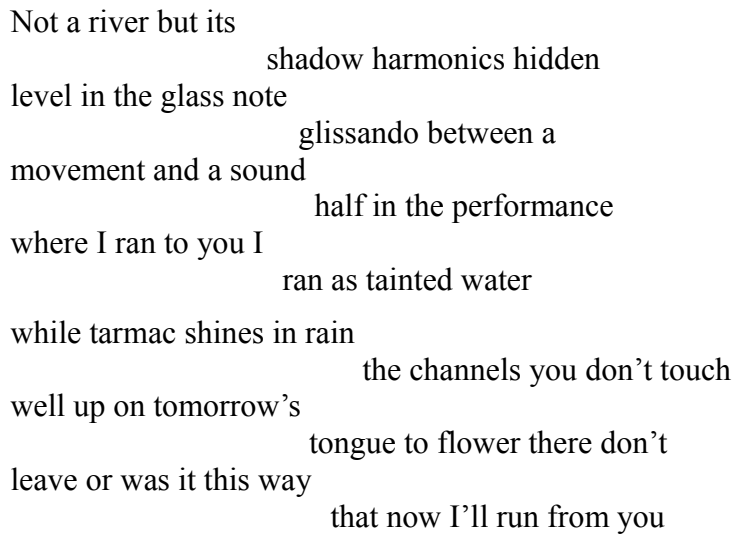
By ZOE SKOULDING.

for the Bièvre

*La Bièvre représente aujourd'hui le plus parfait symbole de la misère féminine exploitée par une grande ville. [...] Comme bien des filles de la campagne, la Bièvre est, dès son arrivée à Paris, tombée dans l'affût industriel des racoleurs ; spoliée de ses vêtements d'herbes et de ses parures d'arbres, elle a dû aussitôt se mettre à l'ouvrage et s'épuiser aux horribles tâches qu'on exigeait d'elle. Cernée par d'âpres négociants qui se la repassent, mais, d'un commun accord, l'emprisonnent à tour de rôle, le long de ses rives, elle est devenue mégissière, et, jours et nuits, elle lave l'ordure des peaux écorchées, macère les toisons épargnées et les cuirs bruts, subit les pincés de l'alun, les morsures de la chaux et des caustiques. Que de soirs, derrière les Gobelins, dans un pestilentiel fumet de vase, on la voit, seule, piétinant dans sa boue, au clair de lune, pleurant, hébétée de fatigue, sous l'arche minuscule d'un petit pont !*

The Bièvre today represents the most perfect symbol of feminine misery exploited by a large city. [...] Like many country girls, the Bièvre fell prey, upon her arrival in Paris, to the industrial snares of touts; despoiled of her dresses of grass and adornments of trees, she had to set to work immediately and wear herself out with the terrible chores demanded of her. Surrounded by rough merchants who pass her daily, but, by common agreement, imprison her in turn the length of her banks, she has become a tannery worker, and, day and night, she washes the filth from stripped skins, soaks the spare fleeces and raw leather, suffers the grip of alum, the bite of lime and caustic. There you see her in the evenings behind Gobelins, in a foul-smelling sludge, alone, trampling in the mud, by moonlight, crying, dazed with fatigue, under the miniscule arch of a little bridge.

J.K. Huysmans, *La Bièvre*, 1914.



The uninhabitable: sea as rubbish dump, coasts bristling with barbed wire, bare ground, mass burial ground, heaps of carcasses, boggy rivers, stinking towns



Not wormwood but stream of  
piss so says Rabelais  
six thousand and fourteen  
dogs went howling after  
the woman in crimson  
Panurge couldn't charm so  
his revenge a river  
of dog-desire maddened  
by scent the dogs all came  
at once they pissed on her  
they pissed at her door in  
streams of bitter water  
this territory marked her  
satin asking for it



Not a river but its  
                                nymph already complaining  
late 1500s in  
                        Baïf's lament for injured  
water where your goblins  
                                where your poisons tint  
inhuman dyers taint  
                                the mixing of our waters  
her own name blotted out  
                                by *Gobelins* she runs  
in the glint of bare life  
                                are you even listening  
the city doesn't  
                                count what lies underneath



Not the source but the effluent  
                                will rather the multitudinous  
waves incarnadine  
                                making the green one  
Gobelin scarlet  
                                affluent in muddy commerce  
all the insect blood of America  
                                rinsed in the piss-poor river  
runs as weft in this repeated  
                                gesture where evenness  
is all that hangs  
                                between hand and eye  
a landscape opens on a wall  
                                the wool pulled over



Not a rill but run-off  
                                guttering to a halt



a boy who knew his name  
water streams out of its  
classification dodges  
and weaves round old duties  
remembered by no-one  
begin with pimpernel  
chervil borage groundsel

*Nous n'avons guère de mouvement machinal dont nous ne pussions trouver la cause dans  
notre coeur, si nous savions bien l'y chercher.*

We have hardly any mechanical movement whose cause is not to be found in the heart, if  
we are acquainted with the manner of seeking it.

Jean-Jacques Rousseau, 'Sixième promenade', *Les Rêveries du promeneur solitaire*, 1782,  
trans. Charles E. Butterworth.



Not memory but moire  
in the silkstream's marbled  
lines wet layers pressed on  
cloth shifted like ray trace  
or a photograph of  
television before  
it existed before  
the river changed to this  
bee hanging in breeze sus-  
pended water's version  
of itself held in a  
breath doubling up as speech  
behind Paris seething  
its lava of events

*Le ruisseau de moire et de soie*

The stream of moire and silk



Claude Lepetit, *Rivière des Gobelins*, 1668.

<http://fortnightlyreview.co.uk/2014/08/bievre/>  
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