

New York Confluence

Stanley Kelman, Jr.

Here in the Hudson-Raritan Estuary,
where the rivers meet the salt and sway,
the Hudson flows both ways, tides surging
and bending back on themselves,
a boundary line, blurred and shifting,
fresh colliding with salt, each force bearing
its unique weight and purpose.

The Delaware, winding from Catskill heights,
carries its lifeblood down, feeding cities
and farmland alike, meeting salt in the Bay.
Its waters mingle with the Atlantic's pull,
a lifeline, a river made for great things.
But what each river brings, how it meets the sea—
the Delaware's crisp rush, charged from the hills,
meets the ocean's vast, indifferent sway.
They fuse in brackish silence, a slow unfolding,
salt infusing fresh, fresh diluting salt,
each pulling back, yielding, and pressing forward.

In these places where water finds water,
I see the places—
where streams surrender to rivers,
where rivers stretch and open to the sea,
the slow fusion of salt and sweet,
two worlds joined and unjoined
in a vast, continuous exchange.

I like to spend my time near water of any kind,
watch the cold, swift rivers join their others,
each with its own story, its own bloodline,
a joining that makes them somehow whole.
It's this tension that draws me—the give and take,
each river tracing a journey home
but leaving a part of itself behind.

There is a beauty in rivers colliding,
the force of Hudson Fjord, ancient and deep,
where glaciers once carved a path to the sea,
a channel from mountains to tide.
Here, it's not just the meeting of rivers,
but the meeting of eras, an age-old merging,

salt and fresh in slow accord,
a remembrance of ice, of fire, of stone.

The Delaware, wild in its upper reaches,
grows quiet and powerful as it heads south,
past the Water Gap, through wilderness,
then turns tidal and busy, a boundary line,
where water and industry find common ground.
Here, the rivers meet not just water,
but the city's own imprint—
bridges, barges, oil slicks, debris carried by tides,
tides that never forget, and never rest.
Each manmade channel marks its hold,
pressing industry into nature's course,
like sand pumped back to beaten shores
after the ocean pulls away.

Here on the coast, rivers open wide,
brackish edges, fresh mingling with salt,
tides pushing and pulling—an ancient dance,
where cities rise on silt and dreams,
and each river brings what it has to give,
even as cities siphon it, draw it close,
a tug and pull from past to present,
salt mingling with stone and steel.

I think of these rivers, how each one
is different, how each gathers a piece
of the land it crosses, how each flows
toward something larger than itself.
Each current, heavy with stories and soil,
carries its gifts downstream, a history in fragments,
and finds itself reborn at the mouth,
where salt and sweet collide, a testament
to what is both lost and gathered.

I follow them all the way back to where they came,
the streams and springs, creeks and glades,
the way they come together, how they find
their place beside the sea, meeting what they are not,
becoming something new, yet still themselves.

At Hudson's mouth, tides swing both ways,
and the Delaware reaches wide, stretching
into the open bay, while New York Harbor waits,
its busy port a witness to their journeys.

It's here, where water meets water,
that the city stands guard, where lives are shaped
by rivers that carry what they can, and release the rest.

Since the Ash Wednesday Storm of '62,
they've pumped sand to keep the beaches,
to fight back the Atlantic's endless demand,
where water meets water in slow surrender.
A give and take, a meeting of forces,
each river bringing what it has,
each tide pulling it back, and still they meet.

Loving rivers as they find their endings,
as water joins with other water,
a quiet culmination of something vast,
a final place where all things flow together,
where the last of what we leave behind
sinks into salt, finds its place in the deep,
an endless confluence, a final resting,
a testament to all that comes, and all that goes.

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