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Waterfall, Rock, Trout

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PETER FILKINS

Waterfall, Rock, Trout

for Richard Wilbur

I

Half a mile upstream, culled by an eddy,
subsurface sinewy swirls set in motion
the river's emerging character, boulders bend-
ing currents upon each other, releasing the energy
whose coursing pulse becomes a colloquy
of runnels and rivulets, rills and fens
soon gathering force, their forward propulsion
mounted by the pull of phantom gravity

swift now through a narrow throaty run
that whips the water white as ivory,
clotting in whirlpools lustrous with sun,
as the river bottoms out, at last set free
to race the gully's granite walls until
it hits those weathered falls and spills and spills.

II

Stasis in flux, a massy knob of granite
planted downstream by a long lost eon
of Mesozoic drift—polished, worn down
by scything currents, yet no less adamant
or real, the mute marmoreal lug of it
unfazed by the river's press and drone,
its frozen magma a squat imperial throne,
the once and future king of the spinning planet.

III

Clever as sunlight padding a forest floor,
trout appear and disappear, shadowy shapes
hung under the shoreline's catkin lips.
Furtive, shy—dissembling is their nature,
the darting trick of it an inner spur
to subterranean litheness giving the slip
to fly or hook, intelligence in the grip
of fins on currents of the iced-down water.

Call it a blessing, call it a lucky strike
to watch their wary calm beneath the falls,
heads pointed upstream, tails gently aquiver,
the sun at certain angles able to make
their speckled bodies glow as if immutable,
suspended in the flow of the flowing river.