

## *Rising*

From within the fissure I rise, old as anything.

The gravel beneath me slides. Blueback herring and eel, alewife and shad muscle in to my wide blue heart, and through. The smudged face of a wolf pools on my surface, and for that one instant I go blind.

Hemlock to either side. Nut trees. Laurel copses. The stony backs of snapping turtles on the shore, muskrat, shrew, and from the unlanterned forest, the bark of a fox, the *skith skith skith* of snakes over leaves, the prow of a bobcat, and when it rains the rain is its own kind of song, not just a drumming, but a lyric.

Were there language, I'd be my own lone letter.

Like all rivers the Schuylkill is the product of crustal deformations and time. It begins unspectacularly, in the Appalachian Mountains of Schuylkill County. It winds, widens, speeds, and slows along a southeastern course, over Precambrian and Paleozoic rocks, over shale and clay, until it finds its way to the Delaware River, draining some 1,916 square miles in the process, and doing this day after day.

## *Bear*

He breathes clouds in and breathes them out. There has been the long sleep of winter, and now as he stands near to my edge—bits of sticks in his matted fur, a lightning strike of white across his chest—he is besieged by smells. The curls inside leaves. The green cracking the earth. The beginnings of berries. If he has spent the winter dreaming wings—moths and birds and hoppers—he is hungry now for fish.

The moon is high, it is afloat—yellow and generous as fruit. A breeze blows in from a place beyond the bend, and I begin to break apart.

On the rise of the hill there is a she-bear waiting.

For bears, for wolves, for panthers, for muskrats, minks, and deer, for huge wild turkeys, for flocks of pigeons, for frogs and hoppers, for most anything one might imagine, the river was a haven.