

Water Before / Water After

[Fraser Champion in Memory]

In the beginning there was a river. The river became a road and the road branched out to the whole world. And because the road was once a river it was always hungry.

—*The Famished Road* by Ben Okri

This ancient Chinese symbol for water suggests everything.

Water flowing downstream from a rivulet to the ocean,
the turbulence that rocks make against water and
against flesh. A young friend and everyone loved him.

There are holes in rivers. Water is as solid
as any force of nature, a mountain of granite,
the love he had for a woman. Rosie. A rose
is just as solid. The water rushes over a rock.
The rock washes over the graveyard.

A hole is formed in the river
when the water rushes back upstream
after going around the rock. It can hold you. Fold you
into yourself. It did. A violent craving for the body,
the hunger to turn flesh into water. Everything moves me. Moves you.
And sometime we yearn for stillness. But stillness is a siren song
for dying. I did not understand this. The woman
holds her son's corpse and curses the Americans.

Blood is a river. The lies of the president are a river.
His mother was at the funeral. I said, "I loved that boy."
She said, "He would have done anything for you." There is that Eskimo
song that a friend sent to me. Diane, how could you know?

A beautiful print with blue and white waves in the background.

All that is missing is the color of blood to win the national flag waving
contest. It read. It said. But who hears the whisper of the words on paper?

Who believes? "Do not cry. You will come back safely."

