The River Conception's Mouth

David Thacker

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Under her linea nigra the abdominals have parted, and the couple has finally neared the river’s estuary, a lowland of swirling impatience and rising pain.

Anxious to be done, to enter the full current and the pushing through, he realizes his wife is a center of commerce, has always been her own cottage industry, while he, roamer and solicitor, is simply a surplus warehouse. The notion mutes the world. Beside him, propped in her hospital bed, awaiting the next contraction, a labor force, an executive, a nearly complete economy watches over her manufacturing: a girl, another mortal consortium. He feels a swell press his conscience. Is he objectifying his wife? His daughter not even born? One day, he knows, he’ll reckon his guilt further, but here, in the mish-mash that he is, the man wants to tell you, daughter, how we entered the river’s mouth, your mother bearing down on the rudder against the sudden constantly choppy water as she also heaved the oars, while your father, mere passenger, newly conscious powerless consort, whooped, cheered. Doubled-up, a mechanical wail grinding from her throat, your mother crowned you with the jeweled halo of herself—a halo that tore so that your face, messy with vernix, could puncture the air.

—David Thacker

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