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## The River Conception's Mouth

David Thacker

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## The River Conception's Mouth

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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This poem won first place in the 2022 Clinton F. Larson Poetry  
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