

PATRICK HICKS

London Underground

Piped in steel,
your murky secrets run beneath the street—
Ravensbourne, Beverley Brook, Wandle.
Cooled iron and bolts, your clamped hospice.
Skiffs once poled through the silt of your inlets,
but now even the wide Fleet gushes
unseen beneath a sheet of ashphalt.
An old viaduct, a mocking crown,
coronates your stolen riverbanks.
Sunlight no longer jewels your surface,
molluscs do not limp through your mud,
dolphins are a genetic memory.
Standing here in Sloane Square,
waiting for the District Line tube,
what is left of the Westbourne babbles
blindly through overhead ducting.
Both of us are herded by Charon,
carried forward, denied the mothy
shimmer of moonlight, we share
the flow of a tightening O,
a pipe that hurtles us beneath the city,
pennies bolted over our eyes.