

The Severn Stour

A child of Worcestershire,
forged in the Clent Hills.
Finds its way to The Black Country,
then dips a languid toe in Staffordshire,
before easing its way to Stourport
to be consumed by the Severn.

Once, industry plotted every meander
of its short journey.
Stalked each twist and turn
as it pushed past mills,
cooled glowing glass,
and weaved a path through carpet factories.
Iron forges greedily drank in its purity
and spat out their vileness
to drown the fish in tainted water.

It gave its very soul
to the ceaseless demands,
gave its lifeblood
to feed the leaching canals
that shepherd its bewildering progress.

For centuries it was abused,
bullied from nature's intended path,
forced through culverts,
pushed under roads and buildings.

The parasitic factories and forges may be gone,
but still it struggles to catch its breath,
suffocated by a cocktail of casually discarded poisons.

The Stour,
no Amazon or Nile,
but in its own way just as mighty.
Carried the burden on its timid shoulders for so long.
It suckles on Clent's tributaries
and hides in plain sight,
as it tiptoes, unnoticed,
through the Black Country's backyard.

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