

1993

## Two Mississippis (poem)

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### Recommended Citation

Gery, John. "Two Mississippis" (poem). *The Iowa Review* 23.2 (Sp/Sum 1993): 129-130.

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## II

And if the river is a man  
rugged and brown, but round and muscular,  
who wanders through the wilderness at dusk,  
who plucks a fallen branch, then ambles on  
between the trees, bowing and rising, who  
at coming to a clearing scales a rock,  
pausing briefly, rubbing his sides, then hums  
and winds around the hills to wander down  
into a pine grove on their farther side,  
who feeds the beavers, beetles, birds, and bears  
thinking him kind, who veers through twilit shadows,  
their brilliance like a memory that flashes  
and is gone, who tells himself those stories  
that echo in the breeze they're carried on,  
whose grey eyes pool when he beholds the sun  
at last, and at the last who spreads his arms  
to seize its light, then turns to go alone  
once more in darkness, leaving in his wake  
no sign of having been there,

then who are we,  
waiting in silence near his path, who strike,  
then leave him on the forest floor for dead?  
Are we, earth's thieves, so starved that we must bleed  
the bled? Can no kind words for us be said?