

## Elk River Falls

is where the Elk River falls  
from a rocky and considerable height,  
turning pale with trepidation at the lip  
(it seemed from where I stood below)  
before it is unbuckled from itself  
and plummets, shredded, through the air  
into the shadows of a frigid pool,  
so calm around the edges, a place  
for water to recover from the shock  
of falling apart and coming back together  
before it picks up its song again,  
goes sliding around the massive rocks  
and past some islands overgrown with weeds  
then flattens out and slips around a bend  
and continues on its winding course,  
according to this camper's guide,  
then joins the Clearwater at its northern fork,  
which must in time find the sea  
where this and every other stream  
mistakes the monster for itself,  
sings its name one final time  
then feels the sudden sting of salt. © Billy Collins

