

Fall 1986

In Mainz, On the Rhine

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Recommended Citation

Lunday, Robert (1986) "In Mainz, On the Rhine," *CutBank*: Vol. 1 : Iss. 27 , Article 29.

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In Mainz, On The Rhine

The Rhine goes by, swallowing
Itself. Even though it's raining
Guests sit outside, getting wet.
A girl sitting on the porch

Curls and uncurls her hair.
She looks at the river and thinks:
"How wrinkled and grey it is!" But she thinks

As well how lovely it is, swallowing
The sky and the landscape. Her hair
Itches her face. As it keeps raining
People get up and leave the porch;

They can ignore the wet
No longer. But the girl, though wet
To her skin, stays. She thinks

She'll miss something if she leaves the porch
For the comfort of the inn. She swallows
The rain on her lips. The rain
Moves through her hair,

Which is now more water than hair,
And she feels her thoughts getting wet,
Feels it will never stop raining—

In the puddle of herself she thinks:
"Will I let this moment swallow
Me whole?" She is the last one on the porch,
It's only her and the frogs on the porch

Now, and some worms, grey strands of hair
Sticking to the stones like words. A swallow
Sits jailed in a cedar, wet

And birdlike, empty of thought.
It does not care about rain,
But there is something about this rain
Scattering itself across the porch

That causes it to think
It flies, though stationary in the tree. Hair
And feathers continue to get wet.

The bird blinks, the girl swallows,
The river and the rain and the hair become one:
The porch disappears beneath its wetness,
The girl thinks, the bird swallows.

Robert Lunday