

## What the Water Knows

What the mouth sings, the soul must learn to forgive.  
A rat's as moral as a monk in the eyes of the real world.  
Still, the heart is a river  
pouring from itself, a river that cannot be crossed.

It opens on a bay  
and turns back upon itself as the tide comes in,  
it carries the cry of the loon and the salts  
of the unutterably human.

A distant eagle enters the mouth of a river  
salmon no longer run and his wide wings glide  
upstream until he disappears  
into the nothing from which he came.

Only the thought remains. Lacking the eagle's cunning  
or the wisdom of the sparrow, where shall I turn,  
drowning in sorrow? Who will know what the trees know,  
the spidery patience of young maple or what the willows confess?

Let me be water. The heart pours out in waves.  
Listen to what the water says.  
Wind, be a friend.  
There's nothing I couldn't forgive.

Sam Hamill (from *Almost Paradise: New & Selected Poems and Translations*,  
Shambhala Publications)